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SHORT STORIES.

No. 657.] For the Week Ending August 3rd, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

MY RIVAL.

♣ ♣ ♣

A . . . . COMPLETE STORY . .

Presently she was off like a bird to the very verge of the cliff. I sprang after her.

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My Rival;

Or, A WEEK AT AN IRISH WATERING-PLACE.

By M. J. GREEN, Author of "My Mother's Diamonds."

I WISH Madge Merrington had not been so provokingly pretty, a perfect gossamer fairy, weaving her webs on all sides, and ensnaring with equal facility the wary and the incautious.

She was seven years old when I first knew her. I was eight-and-twenty, and, as a matter of course, I took her on my knee, petted and caressed her.

But years pass on—lucklessly for some, happily for one who steps from childhood to the fuller fairness of maturity. When Madge was fourteen it grew to be a question of nicety when my friendly admiration should cease, or rather how far it should go.

If I had not seen her so constantly the matter would have been less embarrassing. I should have left her at one date a charming child, and found her after due interval a graceful girl. But I was on the most intimate terms at her home. Mr. and Mrs. Merrington were my oldest friends, and as I lived on the same terrace with them in a select suburb of the Irish metropolis, they extended their hospitality to me with the warmth and impulsiveness of the genuine Hibernian heart. Now on what precise day or at what precise hour I was first to cease my coaxing attentions and bestow my last kiss, was a point which puzzled me considerably. Wherefore should I be unchecked in my demonstration one day, restrained the next? What reason could I, or any one, assign for an abrupt change from freedom to frigidity? The difficulty, nevertheless, was solved for me in a manner which I had least expected.

One afternoon, in the month of May, I had returned early from my office, and had made my way direct to Merrington Villa, with a bouquet in my hand and a parcel under my arm. Madge had reached the mature age of fifteen on this memorable day, and this was an event I could not forget.

I found her alone in the drawing-room, which looked on a lovely little flower-ground at the back. She was in white muslin, with pale-pink bows, and large rosettes of the same hue on high-heeled shoes—rather a juvenile costume for the hour; but she was to have an early party of young friends, and was ready dressed for their arrival. I presented my gifts, and I don't think anyone can blame me if I accepted her thanks; but at that instant the door opened, and Mrs. Merrington appeared.

I do not wish to be evasive, but I really cannot distinctly recall in what exact attitude Madge was at the crisis. I have a faint recollection of the touch of some dear little fingers at the tips of my moustache. Another shock, however, overpowers the memory of this electric thrill. It was that caused by the tone of Mrs. Merrington.

"Madge! come down this moment, miss! You are too great a girl to be on Mr. Hartwell's knee."

I started; but the young lady was more self-possessed.

"Dear old fellow!" she exclaimed, "Why shouldn't I thank him? Of course he must have a kiss for the big book and bouquet he has brought me on my birthday."

And then, with a sweet roguish look, she was gone. A quick knock at the hall-door had brought new excitement to her thoughts, and I and the reproof were alike forgotten.

"Madge is very wild and wilful," said Mrs. Merrington, drawing near to me, and fixing her hazel eyes full on mine. "She forgets that she is not a child any longer."

"She does not wish to forget friends, at all events,' I said quietly.

"Nor I either, Mr. Hartwell. But you see—you feel for yourself that she has grown up quickly; in fact, she is tall and old for her age, though her manners are so unformed. I must not let her turn into a romp."

"I shall not encourage the propensity, Mrs. Merrington," was all I could say, for somehow a blow seemed struck at me as she spoke; the gates of a too happy paradise were closed swiftly by an inflexible hand.

"That is all right," returned the mother, with a smile. "If Madge needs a hint again, I know you will not."

After this day I visited only occasionally at the Merringtons'. Yet whenever I saw my young friend I felt that she could never be tutored into worldliness, and that the warm heart of the child was being preserved true and guileless through the more difficult stage of girlhood.

Three years passed; Madge was eighteen, and a brighter being never dropped the garb of girlhood for that of lovely womanhood, and rose, fresh as a fairy in some dazzling transformation scene, before the enrapt gaze.

She was *petite*; but her figure was perfect with the slightness which develops into roundness; her hands small and white, with that rapidity and deftness in their grasp which marks the brisk decided character. Nothing betrays more weakness of temperament, more helpless indecision, than the limp touch which is given by some fingers. They seem to follow the slow motions of the brains, and to be unable to catch quickly or surely at any object upon earth.

Madge had large hazel eyes, like her mother's, with a short but dark fringe of lashes, and their gaze was clear and open, more penetrating than pensive. Her hair was wavy, brown in its tint, and she wore it brushed in curly ripples off the whitest of temples. Of her charming rosy mouth I will not speak. It was the feature of all others which spoke for itself, and which smiled too straight into the heart to leave actual impression upon the memory.

Mr. and Mrs. Merrington did not see much company, and thus it came to pass that an invitation to the young lady to spend a month with a friend at a northern watering-place was met by her with a joyous response. The consent of her parents had been gained, and she

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set out radiantly on her trip. The month was July, the weather propitious; Madge was to have sea-bathing, boating, riding, and dancing. If she were high-spirited before she left, what might not be expected from such exciting regimen as this!

The time for her stay passed over, and she did not return. A further extension of leave was asked for, and conceded amidst some laments from her parents on the loneliness they were left to. Meanwhile I saw them more frequently than before.

They were very kind to me, and when an office holiday came to both of us gentlemen, it was proposed at once that we should follow in the steps of the little truant, and taste for ourselves a week's refreshment among the Atlantic breezes on the far coast of Antrim.

Madge had been staying at Fairbank, an inland residence about two miles from the coast; but on our arrival at the fashionable hotel of the adjacent watering-place, she was to join us there.

Too well I remember the exquisite evening on which we reached our destination. It was in the middle of August. The sea was grand but not menacing; the sun was sinking in glowing splendour behind the bold promontory to the left of the town; and the air, blown across the crested waves from the far western world was borne like a breath of new life upon the heart.

The terraces were gay with promenaders, and every eye looked clear, every face bright, from contact with the exciting elements around.

Sea breezes and waters had been tasted of till mists and moodiness were swept away, till sunshine and brilliancy seemed the predominant features of life.

Just as the bell rang for the *table d'hôte* dinner a carriage drove up, and looking eagerly from the bow-window in front of the hotel I saw Madge spring out of it.

She ran up the steps, and was greeted by her father and mother who stood in the portico, and lastly with a quiet smile and a grasp of the hand by me.

"I am so glad you have come," was her pleasant welcome. "We shall be so happy all together. I have been longing for you to be here."

All three seemed included in this greeting, and indeed Madge, if more beautiful than ever, was unchanged in her sweet joyousness of manner towards myself.

After dinner we adjourned at once to the headland, which was a fashionable resort for an evening walk, and many a glance was attracted to the merry young lady of our party.

For some time Madge tripped along on the grass promenade of the centre platform, where numerous strollers were enjoying, like ourselves, the parting loveliness of sea and sunset.

Presently, however, she was off like a bird to the very verge of the surrounding cliffs, to catch a fuller view of the great Atlantic steamer bound for the New World. I sprang after her. A gust had risen, and Mrs. Merrington looked apprehensive.

"Oh, there is no fear," was Madge's rejoinder to my expostulation. "I am as sure-footed as a goat, I am made for high life!" and her sweet lips parted in their loveliest smile.

"Madge, come back!" cried her mother. "You are too giddy."

"No, not the least light-headed, I assure you mamma."

"Light-footed, rather?" I suggested.

"Yes, and light-hearted too, I hope."

"There is no doubt of that."

"Oh, how I wish Harry was here!" was her quick exclamation. "We should be all the merrier then."

"Harry? Who is he?" I inquired.

She looked at me for an instant; then lowered her eyes, and the slightest flush rose into her face.

"Oh, a great friend of mine. Did not mamma tell you?" she murmured. "We met at Fairbank."

"Indeed! And you like him very much?"

"Yes," with another mischievous glance. "Have you any objection?"

"Of course not. If you are pleased, that is enough for me."

"Well, Harry is delightful," she pursued. "You would think so yourself. We were inseparable at once. Mamma knows all about it, and has asked my dear Harry to join us here to-morrow. I shall be quite happy then." And then a beautiful light came into her eyes—a light which I could not mistake.

I was silent for a while, and we walked on together, Mr. and Mrs. Merrington having turned back on the promenade.

"I suppose he is young?" I hazarded, after a pause.

"Yes, not old, certainly, but a good many years in advance of me."

"And good looking?"

"Too handsome, I think. That is my one objection."

"It is no great drawback, Madge," and I sighed.

She caught the sigh, and the half-sad expression that accompanied it, for she questioned me the next instant, with her eyes fixed on my face.

"What makes you so grave, Mr. Hartwell?"

"I suppose because I am growing grey," was my response.

"What nonsense! Your hair is just the right hue, none else would suit you so well."

"But it does not make a younger man of me."

"And why wish to be young? What good would it do you?"

This was a poser certainly; and fearing I was getting on hazardous ground, I hastened to change the conversation. I began to think Madge something of a coquette. She knew—she must have known—what I felt, that I was wild enough to love her, and yet she restrained in no way her fascinations; she looked at me with her bewildering eyes, smiled on me with her enchanting lips, and then all but laughed at me if I showed sentiment or susceptibility. She could talk of "Harry" and her admiration for him with coy delight, and expatiate on his youth and attractiveness, while I, grave and saddened, was expected to listen and congratulate.

On returning to the hotel we adjourned to the inner saloon at the end of the long coffee-room, which we found pretty well filled with company. It was amusing to watch the groups of friends who chatted together, and of strangers who eyed one another. A scanning glance was given to each personage who entered, and there was either a quick greeting from some amongst the party, or the new-comer found himself condemned to a sort of suspicious isolation. We, being four in number, were independent of such scant courtesy as might be offered, and contented ourselves with the accommodation of a comfortable couch and the entertainment of watching the scene from a theatrical point of view.

"Adventures of an Actress" next week.

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There were several Americans amongst the assembly, and these were easily recognised by their gesticulations, their elaborate dress on the ladies part, and their harshly attuned voices in the case of the men.

Madge could scarcely restrain her smiles at one specimen of the fraternity, who wore his red hair in a flame-like pyramid with a sort of crater in the middle. He spouted forth volubly as he stood in a conspicuous position in the room, his small eyes making the most of their vision, and a long hand extended "right ahead," as he would himself express it.

"Your Cosway," he exclaimed, after some expatiation on the scenery of the locality, "your Cosway, as I take it, is a worked out viaduct, overwashed now by our big ocean; and your two specks of islands were once one ——"

"Won! by whom?" said a supercilious-looking gentleman, who twirled a yellow moustache.

"One, I said—run up together."

"I'm as glad they're a trifle apart now," interposed a bluff black man, whose accent flavoured somewhat too strongly of Tipperary. "We are near enough to please me an' many others too. The farther off the better from those who are neither kin nor kind."

"You're a bit of a Home Ruler, I guess?" rejoined the American.

"I'm for Home Rule, if that's what you mean. We haven't got it yet."

"Nor won't for many a day, while there's a stone on the Giant's Causeway or a northern foot on the ground."

This was declaimed in a vehement brogue by another listener.

His staunch figure, broad open features, and freckled face stamped him at once as the genuine Orangeman of the North, who is proud of his country, his prowess, and his Protestantism.

"You're a Belfast boy, perhaps?" retorted the representative of the South. "You can spin a yarn of linen, I make no doubt, but you had better leave the talk alone. You can't run on there."

"I can cut short if I can't run on," was the retort, "and that's sometimes more to the point," and he turned off abruptly.

At this juncture a lady with prompt tact rose to propose some music. She glided over to a friend who showed herself pleasantly acquiescent, and in her turn moved to the piano, which a gentleman opened for her.

The southern, apparently an old acquaintance of the musician, at once sprang forwards.

"A song of my own choosing, then, Mrs. Lanyon," he said. "You can't refuse it to me. Let us have 'The Wearing of the Green.'"

"No, no!" cried a dozen voices.

But at the moment the lady began, in a voice so sweet that no one could hush it, the somewhat rebel words:

"Farewell, for I must leave thee,
My own, my native shore,
And, doomed in foreign lands to dwell,
May never see thee more;
For laws, our tyrant laws, have said
That seas must roll between
Old Erin and her faithful sons
That love to wear the green.
Yet whatsoe'er our fate may be
When oceans wash between,
Her truest sons will ever sing
The wearing of the green.

"My father loved his country,
And sleeps within her breast,
While I, that would have died for her,
Must never so be blest.
Those tears my mother shed for me—
Far fewer they had been
If I had proved a traitor
To the wearing of the green.
Yet brighter days will surely come
Than those that we have seen,
When Erin's sons may proudly sing
'The Wearing of the Green.'"

The Orangeman had risen, and was listening with such a knit brow that some stormy passage seemed inevitable, till, just as the last note died away, the air was changed with pantomimic rapidity, and the loyal chords rang forth of "The Boyne Water."

Everyone laughed then. Anger at the charming *mélange* was impossible. Even the Tipperary blood seemed restrained from ebullition by the soothing potion which had been first drunk in, and presently all settled down in detachments to chess, cards, or music.

The next day was bright and bracing, and at ten o'clock our party mounted the long car which starts from the hotel at that hour for the Giant's Causeway.

I had a place beside Madge, and was content. She, on her part, looked bewitching in a gipsy hat crowned with wild flowers, and talked alternately to me and a companion on the left. The acquaintance of the latter gentleman she had made at the *table d'hôte*.

He was a Professor from the Belfast College, wore spectacles and a sort of astrologer's hat, and was sufficiently antiquated to stifle any pang of jealousy I might have felt, and give me a sensation of rejuvenescence and agility which was very gratifying.

I could bound off the car quicker than he on our arrival, offer Madge my hand, and carry her off, the first of the pedestrians, for the cliffs. The sea was wild and lovely. A north-westerly wind blew the waves in foaming cascades upon the rocks and strand, and the curious pipe-like pillars of the great organ facing seaward were burnished by a gleam of the most golden sunlight.

Presently I heard Mrs. Merrington's voice behind.

"Madge is it in your pink llama you are? That looks too glaring out of doors. You should only wear it in the evenings."

The young lady had just thrown off a grey cloak which had enveloped her on the drive, and stood forth brightly in the above apparel.

"But why, mamma?" she responded. "What harm, if it is pretty? Daylight should be as honoured as gaslight. I am not afraid of colour."

She certainly need not be so, while her fair faultless complexion eclipsed all in brilliancy, and threw every tint, even of rose, into the shade.

"We shall be hurried on our return, and have no time to dress," she confided to me roguishly, "and Harry will have arrived then."

"Oh! that accounts for all."

"All what?"

"Your gaiety and your garb."

"But when am I grave? Do you ever see me dull, Mr. Hartwell?"

"No, in truth; but there are degrees even of liveliness. Sunshine in the heart throws the strongest light of all. You know what you told me: 'When Harry comes I

Tell your friends of Hazel Harlow the Actress.

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Madge could scarcely restrain her smiles at one specimen of the fraternity, who wore his red hair in a flame-like pyramid with a sort of crater in the middle.

shall be quite happy.' Does not that imply a want, now?"

"Ah! don't criticise me or my words, don't draw logical conclusions. I speak what I think at the moment. But there are many moments—many moods."

"The more the merrier in your case, I think." And saying this I gave her my hand to help her over a barrier of rock which was our first approach to the Causeway. The rest of the party were on a more circuitous path, and followed us leisurely.

Madge was agile enough to accept but little assistance, and she stepped lightly from stone to stone till we had gained the further projection of broken columns fitting curiously into one another, which our American would describe as "the Viaduct."

This rocky groundwork showed fragments of every fantastic shape, some regular, others irregular, round, triangular, octagon, and nonagon.

Above us were pillars of colossal height, inlaid, as it were, into the dark cliffs; while the ocean stretching out far before our gaze, dashed its noisy waters upon the basement of the pedestals, and fled in more foaming waves towards the mouth of the caves beyond.

"We must have a boat!" cried Madge. "See, there is a party in one at this moment. They are at the entrance of the large cavern. How they toss up and down in the surge! Harry thinks boating slow work; but there is nothing tame, I am sure, in a row about here."

Harry again! How I hated the name, and especially the soft blush that announced it! Looking at Madge, I saw that sparkle in her eye which betrayed her secret, and struck a blow equally at my own presumption.

The professor came up just then, and began some disquisition on geological researches. He brought out his knowledge in allusions to stratified and igneous rocks, to the classes of strata comprising palæozoic, post-tertiary, &c., and might have wandered on into still more puzzling terms, had not Madge shown something of impatience.

She gladly seconded my move for an adjournment to the heights above us, which were covered with a mossy undulating turf, and looked inviting for the picnic luncheon that was in prospect.

The repast having been spread and partaken of, Madge was the first to proclaim its conclusion, and dart in her usual impulsive way to the very verge of a cliff.

"Such a great seagull!" she cried. "He has just risen from the crag beneath us, and flies direct seaward. A good omen for the weather—is it not? Oh, I should

Beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventures next week.

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love to take wing in that way! I feel really as if I could flit off quite securely, and alight on the head of one of those pedestrians below."

"You would be much more likely to alight on your own," said her father, pulling her back somewhat brusquely from her airy situation. "If you feel safe yourself, Madge, that is no reason for making your mother and every one else uncomfortable about you."

The young lady succumbed to this reproof and was tolerably amenable for the rest of the morning.

On our return to the hotel she became excited anew. At the same time she did not try to escape from my companionship, but, having put a question to the waiter, she turned to me with a smile, and announced that "Harry" was awaiting her in the inner saloon, and asked if I would not wish to be introduced. I acquiesced with the readiness which is allied to curiosity, and followed her promptly.

I could not but wonder to myself, as we traversed the coffee-room, at the gentleman's tardiness in hastening forth to meet her. He could scarcely fail to have seen the long car drive up to the door as it passed the windows of the drawing-room, and yet she was left to seek him out, instead of accepting the first greetings and attentions at his hands.

However, Madge seemed perfectly satisfied, and it was assuredly not my part to desire a more lover-like alacrity.

The door of the saloon was closed, and as Madge had her grasp on the handle she said to me in a whisper:

"Now what do you expect? Tell me beforehand."

"An Adonis, of course," was my reply. "But I am afraid not a very active one. He ought to have been earlier on the scene."

She laughed.

"You are a famous guesser. Indolence is just the one fault I have to find," and thereupon the door was thrown open and she went impulsively forwards.

At this hour the room was usually deserted, and a glance showed me that it contained but a single occupant.

I paused in perplexity, and a strange sensation sent a throbbing to my heart. Madge had her arms round someone's neck; her soft clinging embrace was given with a warmth and impulsiveness which would have been too much for me under other circumstances. As it was, I felt my colour rise, and, stepping closer, I uttered her name in quick accents.

"Madge, Madge, who is this?"

She was round in an instant, with her hazel eyes full of their merriest light.

"My friend *Harrie*. Won't you recognise her? Allow me to introduce you in full form. Mr. Hartwell, Miss Henrietta Delancey."

Never, I think, had I greeted a stranger with such impetuous delight before. I am almost afraid that my excessive eagerness must have been mistaken for familiarity; for Miss Henrietta, who was very handsome, gave me a scanning glance from her fine eyes, and drew back with the slightest degree of hauteur. Her expression was by no means so sweet as Madge's, though she had the advantage of her in height, and possibly in what is termed *style*.

Madge evidently admired her immensely, and clung about her in a delighted way which was very childlike and charming. I had still, I found, a rival in "Harrie"; for words and smiles were all given in this quarter now, and I was left pretty much to the task of reflection till we were out on the hill in the evening for our usual promenade. Miss Delancey had accepted then the escort of an old acquaintance, whom she had met unexpectedly at the *table d'hôte*, and Madge was content perforce to fall back on my companionship. She did it with so good a grace that I had to forgive her everything—her previous artifice, and her recent neglect. I could not but call her to some account, however, as we found ourselves side by side.

"Why did you tell me it was a gentleman friend I was to expect?" I questioned, with a full glance beneath her hat. She met the look with wide-open eyes.

"I never said so, never, indeed, Mr. Hartwell?"

"Well, you allowed me to assume it."

"Oh! the mistake was a too amusing one to be set right. You spoke so touchingly of 'Harry,' looked forward so longingly to his advent."

"I doubt about the latter part of that statement, Miss Madge. I should have been quite satisfied never to see the expected guest, if you had been of the same mind."

"And why, pray, if you pictured him so fascinating?"

"Possibly for that very reason. Have you ever heard of such a thing as jealousy?"

The flush deepened on Madge's cheek; but then she indulged so often in this bewildering loveliness I could not appropriate anything special from the token.

"Madge," I said as we went onwards, "I am in your hands now. Lead me to some charmed spot."

"Do you want to be enchanted?"

"Scarcely that. The magic chains are too fast already; but I would cast a spell over you. In this delicious dreamy air it might be possible."

"And not in daylight? You have given me fair warning. I refuse to be deluded."

"Illusion I spoke of; but if you prefer a reality——"

I stopped, her gaze was turned on me, and something in its questioning light forbade interrogation of mine.

"There is my nook!" she exclaimed the next instant. "Far down in the steepest part of the cliff, where no passer-by can penetrate. Seated there, looking straight seaward, I can forget the whole world."

"And you enjoy that?"

"When I am selfish."

"You give it a right term. Whenever you are thus hard upon others, be so upon yourself."

We were watching the last glimpse of sunset as we spoke. The globe of fire, which had floated, as it were, on the surface of the water, vanished with a strange suddenness from our eyes, and at the moment a soft vapoury atmosphere replaced the former radiancy.

Madge turned landwards with one of her swift motions.

"We must hasten now," she said; "my mother will be lamenting the loss of my cloud. I am to follow the sky, it seems, and when it wraps itself up I must do the same."

"Well, you like to look high, I remember that."

She only smiled, made no disclaimer. Yet the charge was for ever refuted when I grew aspiring on my part; and to a question put to her at last no denial rose, either, to her lips.

With this happiness my stay at the seaside ended. It was a farewell to the place, but not to what had passed in it. The memories of the visit and its summer lights were to live in a brightness which has had no sunset.

"Startling Stage Revelations" next week.

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THE POWER OF HOPE.

BY JOHN HENRY PEAT.

We called him "Doctor"—not because he was a medical man, or had ever attempted to join the ranks of the profession, but because he was chiefly to be found in the company of young medicos, and largely interlarded his conversation with the terms he had learned from them.

When first I made his acquaintance he was, in appearance and manner, a gentleman, but a gentleman who bade fair to lose the instincts of his class. For two years he had been known to the circle in which I found him, but nobody could give any information as to his previous history.

His name was Alfred Barber. He was in receipt of an income sufficiently large to provide him with all the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life, and which also left him with a sufficient margin to enable him to join the Bohemian crew in convivial evenings at "The George," the house specially favoured by the embryo doctors. From what source his income was derived, or who and what his family were, no one knew.

The night my brother took me down to join the charmed circle at the "George," Alf, as he was called when the nickname was not substituted, was present, and I was introduced to him. I have always remembered the manner in which he acknowledged the introduction.

"Youngster," he said, he was considerably my senior, "I am glad to welcome you among us, provided you have a strong head and a firm will. If not, Tom has made a mistake in bringing you here."

There was a general protest against this.

"What do you mean, Barber?" interrogated one.

Ignoring this question he put another to me.

"Are you anxious to acquit yourself creditably and rise high in your profession?" he asked.

"Most certainly I am," I replied with all the enthusiasm of youth.

The "Doctor" turned to the crowd sitting round the table, all of whom were gazing half in wonder, half in amusement at Barber.

"Will any gentleman present who has realized his early ambitions kindly signify the fact by rising," he exclaimed.

Nobody rose.

"There, my friend, you observe the mute confession of at least partial failure, and this particular society, to which you are now introduced, has provided more instances of this kind than any other, and now having warned you as to the probable result of becoming a member, if you fail I am guiltless in the matter."

"Fancy Doctor Barber moralising," broke in a lively looking member of the company.

"Shut up, Jingle," retorted Barber. "You protest too much, considering you are one of the most lamentable instances of failure present."

"Oh, indeed!" remarked the worthy addressed.

"Yes, that you are, and I have no hesitation in venturing on a prophecy concerning you."

"Is Barber also among the prophets?" sarcastically inquired Jingle.

"At any rate I am prophetically inspired concerning you"

"Let us have the benefit of your prophecies, then."

"Very well. Your exam. is fast approaching. You will be 'ploughed,' and eventually find yourself on the dicky of a hansom."

"If I thought you were anything of a prophet, doctor, I should immediately cut this crowd," replied the one addressed as Jingle, dropping his bantering tone. "After pinching and saving as she has done to give me my chance, it would break the mater's heart were any such thing to come to pass as you so gloomily predict."

"I am surprised at you, Jingle. The idea of a medical student talking of a broken heart. Why, man, such an expression as that is in itself such a display of ignorance of the very rudiments of your profession as to effectually bar the way to your further advancement."

"Bravo, Doctor!" shouted the crowd.

"Gentlemen," broke in the member who occupied the chair at the head of the table, "you are talking shop, which is a breach of our rules, and you are allowing the requirements of a guest to go unattended to, which is a gross violation of the laws of hospitality. Jingle, you and Barber are the offenders in this matter, so I jointly fine you drinks round."

Thus was the manner of my introduction to the "Doctor."

Though I was not a very frequent visitor at the meetings of the "Jollyboys club," yet occasionally I dropped in to spend an evening with them, and from my observation I concluded that the most likely man to drive a hansom was the "Doctor" himself.

He was fast losing the smartness of appearance and manner which had characterised him, and the income which had been sufficient was now evidently far too small for the demand made upon it.

This was apparent in trifles. The various articles of jewellery which at one time had adorned his person were now conspicuous by their absence.

His rings went first, then the neat scarf-pin—a valuable one—vanished, and his watch was so long absent, ostensibly undergoing repairs, that we formed our own conclusions as to its abiding place.

About that time I was called home and temporarily lost sight of my acquaintances, and during this time the exam. had come and gone.

In one respect my friend "Doctor" had prophesied only too truly. Jingle—careless, lighthearted and sanguine Jingle—had been most ignominiously "ploughed," and the consequences had been still more disastrous. From the day the results were announced Jingle had become utterly reckless. Thoughtless and perhaps selfish he had been, but he most uncompromisingly refused to return home to his widowed mother with his failure. He could not bear, he said, to face her and say that her sacrifices and her care were all of no avail, and so he grieved her more by staying away and maintaining a dogged silence.

Night after night he went home helplessly drunk. When his cash had gone, he commenced pawning his possessions, until at last all that remained were the clothes in which he stood.

"Adventures of an Actress" next week

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At this point, his maternal uncle came upon the scene, and after a while his persuasions, backed by those of Jingle's colleagues, resulted in his promising to return home; but when the time really came for his departure the thought of facing his mother with his failure was too much for him and he disappeared leaving no trace behind him.

All this was retailed to me on my return to town.

"But what about our prophetic friend?" I asked.

"Oh, that is another surprise in store for you," was the reply.

"Why, what has happened?"

"The unexpected, of course. You remember how he was gradually sinking. Well, suddenly he pulled up short, turned completely round, and started to climb again. Since then we have not seen much of him."

"And the reason of this—what is it?" I queried.

"That we have not yet learned, but I should guess there is a lady in the case."

"What! the 'Doctor' in love!"

"Well, why not?" queried my informant.

"Oh! I know of no reason against it, but I never thought of the 'Doctor' as a man likely to come under a woman's influence."

A few weeks elapsed before I ran against Barber, and when I saw him I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes. There stood the redoubtable "Doctor" himself, smiling and fresh. He was immaculately attired, and looked more a gentleman—which he really was—than ever I had seen him before.

"Hello, youngster!" he exclaimed, "you seem surprised to see me."

"Well," I stammered, "I—I am rather surprised."

He looked at me in an amused kind of way.

"I say, youngster"—he always addressed me in that manner, by the way—"come on, now, confess, is it merely seeing me that has surprised you so perceptibly?"

"It is partly that and partly—well, never mind about the rest, I am glad to see you."

"All right, my boy," he replied, his eyes twinkling in enjoyment of my embarrassment, "I know. You are surprised to see me 'clothed and in my right mind'—is that it?"

I nodded assent. Then he continued.

"Have you any engagement this evening?" he inquired, "if not, you must be my guest, and I will promise you an interesting story."

"I'll come with pleasure," I replied, and with this we parted.

At the time appointed I arrived at my friend's abode, and we were soon deep in conversation.

"You know, youngster," he said, in his own congenial style. "I like you, and I am going to tell you something of my story. I shall not trouble you with details of my boyhood and youth, but proceed straight to the time when I became engaged to be married. For a long time the course of our love ran smoothly, in spite of the old adage that 'the course of true love never runs smooth,' until there came a time, when, owing to certain untoward circumstances I embarked on a course of deception. Now, in justice to myself I must say that this deception was not of a kind that would have injured anyone, but nevertheless it was deception, and as such, was, of course, reprehensible. There came a time when I was discovered. Then came a cruel, crushing blow. The young lady to whom I was engaged was the soul of honour and truth, and she had esteemed me likewise. When she learned that the man she had set up on a pedestal and almost worshipped, was merely an idol with feet of clay, she wrote me a curt—very curt—note, finally and forever terminating our engagement. It was then I commenced the life I was leading when first you met me. As you know, I was rapidly going down, when another turn of events put a stop to it."

Here he paused and looked reflectively in the fire, but it was evident his thoughts were not unpleasant ones, for he smiled as he gazed. For a moment or two we sat thus and then he again broke the silence. Raising his eyes from the fireplace to the mantel-piece he resumed his story.

"There, right in front of you, is the photograph of the lady who has brought about the change."

A question rose to my lips, but ere I could frame it into words he had answered it.

"That is the lady to whom I was engaged, and to whom I hope to be again engaged when I have proved my worthiness. While you were away we met, and as a result of that meeting a second interview was arranged in a quiet corner of the park, where we could converse undisturbed. The appointment was kept, and out of the fulness of my heart my mouth spoke. I told her that my love for her was true gold, purged of all its dross by the fires of suffering through which it had passed. I also told her that with some hope of regaining the love which had formerly been mine I could work, but without it my life would be a blank.

"Ultimately she gave me that hope and now you know the reason of the change in me. I am afraid I have wearied you with my story youngster."

"Not in the least," I hastily interposed.

"I am not great at moralising, my boy, but out of my own experiences let me give you just one word of advice. Don't ever—no matter what the circumstances—deceive your friends. One word more and I have done. Don't let that old club of ours blight your career as it has done that of others, notably poor old Jingle."

During the next six months I was studying hard. My friend and I occasionally spent an evening together and with each meeting I left him with increased respect. At last, the period of his probation came to an end. How well I remember that evening. He received me with quite a boyish delight.

During the time of his test he had avoided the subject that lay nearest his heart in his intercourse with Miss Harding, but to me he had spoken without reserve. If ever a man really and truly loved a woman, Alfred Barber loved, with the utmost strength and fervour, Miss Harding.

"Wish me joy, youngster," he said, "to-morrow the ban of silence is removed. To-morrow I shall receive my reward, and the bitter past will forever pass into oblivion. To-morrow I shall place this outward emblem on her finger and again call her mine," and he drew a magnificent half-hoop diamond ring from his pocket.

"You seem pretty confident that the answer will be favourable," I remarked.

"Of course I am. Did not Maud give me her promise, and have I not—egotistical though my words may appear—honestly complied with the terms of the agreement? Good heavens, youngster," he added more gravely, "were I to be disappointed now I should go utterly and irretrievably to the bad."

On the following evening I was sitting in my own

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room thinking of my friend, wondering what was happening, and picturing the happy scene attending the renewal of his engagement when I heard footsteps on the stairs, and a moment later there was an imperative knock at my door. I opened it hastily. There stood a messenger, panting breathless.

"What is it?" I asked, fearing the reply for a presentiment of disaster had seized me.

"Are you Mr. Boydell?" was the inquiry.

"I am," I replied. "What is it?"

"Will you come round to Mr. Barber's rooms?" was the answer.

"What has happened?"

"He is dangerously ill, sir. Will you kindly come at once?"

Quickly slipping into my overcoat, I seized my hat and accompanied the messenger downstairs. Hailing a passing cab I sprang in and directed the driver to go at top speed. As we dashed up to the door it was flung open hurriedly.

"Is that Mr. Boydell?" inquired my friend's landlord.

"Yes!"

"Will you go up to his room at once?"

"Tell me what has happened."

"I can't, sir. He went out this afternoon looking brighter than ever I remember to have seen him. He came back about two hours ago with the look of a man completely bowled over. I followed him up to his room, but he turned on me quite savagely and ordered me away. About half an hour ago I heard him fall and I immediately rushed up I found him insensible on the floor. At once I sent for a doctor and then seeing one of your cards on his dressing table I despatched a a messenger for you. That is all I can tell you, sir."

I proceeded to my friend's room.

He had recovered consciousness and as I entered, his eyes turned in my direction. I was inexpressibly shocked by his appearance.

As his landlord had said, he indeed looked completely bowled over! As I approached the bed on which he had been placed he extended his hand.

His first remark startled me.

"Hearts do break, youngster," he said, "mine is broken."

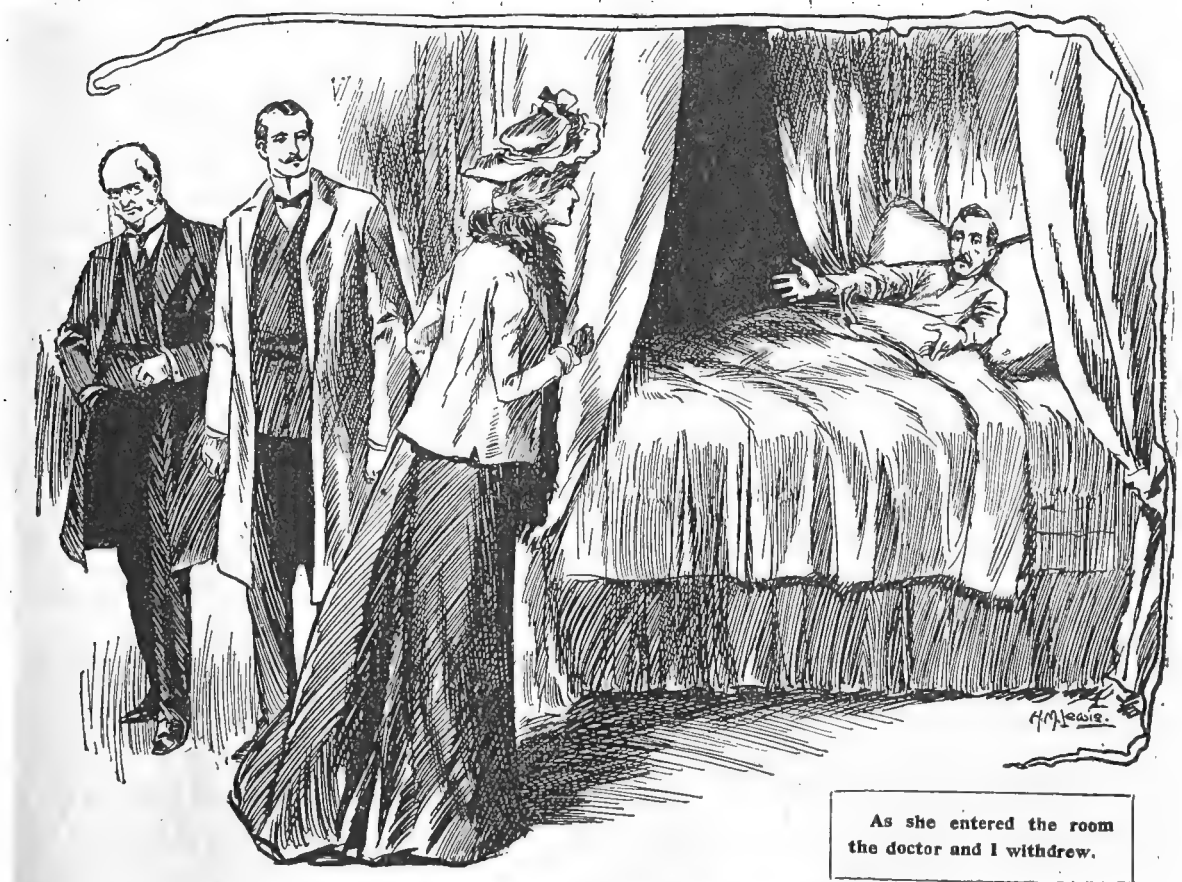
My mind immediately reverted to the occasion. When he had taken Jingle to task for the use of that expression, and with this thought came another. Where was Jingle now? My reverie was disturbed by my friend's voice.

"It's all over, youngster. I have been living in a fool's paradise."

I looked at him inquiringly.

"Doctor," he said to the medical man who had been summoned, "will you leave us together for a few minutes?"

The doctor bowed and withdrew.



As she entered the room the doctor and I withdrew.

Beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventures next week.

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"Youngster," he began, "she has rejected me. Her love died when she discovered my deception. Now she has deceived me, and my guilt in that matter is expiated."

"Miss Harding has deceived you?" I queried.

"She has done more, youngster. She has broken my heart. Let me tell you."

"Some other time. You had better rest now," I answered.

"No, I must tell you now. I must talk, or I shall go mad."

"Well, if it will relieve you, go on."

The story he told me, put briefly, was this. On the occasion of that meeting, which had resulted in a change of life, he had told her that without her the burden of his life was becoming intolerable, but that with hope he could carry it cheerfully.

After much pleading Miss Harding gave him that hope on which he had lived for the last six months.

She argued with herself thus: If Alfred Barber pursued his course unchecked it was plain that there could only be one end. Could he but be induced to reform his habits, there was the possibility that strength of mind and purpose would also be established and remain. In plain words Miss Harding held out a hope which she had no intention of fulfilling. But if he were only lifted out of his morbid and depressed state and placed amid better surroundings, the improved conditions, and the new habits would be sufficient to sustain him. His protestations that he could not, would not live without her, she had treated as the outcome of a weak and somewhat disordered mind. Hence her action.

This was the story Alfred Barber had to tell and as I heard it I wondered what would be the result of it all. I turned to my friend.

"But surely you are not going to give way utterly. This has been a severe shock, I know, but you must pull yourself together."

"Youngster, it may be a confession of weakness but I cannot, I had one hope, one aim, one incentive. Now I have nothing."

I was silent, for in the presence of this hopelessness I could find no words. At this juncture the doctor re-entered the room and an idea seized me.

"Will you stay until I return?" I asked.

Having received his promise I approached my friend, and told him that I had an appointment which I must keep but that I would return shortly.

When I reached the door I found, to my surprise that the cabman whom I had dismissed was still there.

"How is Mr. Barber?" he asked, and stepped on to the footpath.

"He is very ill," I replied. "Do you know him?"

"Know him—I should rather think I do."

My first thought was that he had been employed at some time by my friend and had a grateful recollection of a liberal fare, but there was something in his tone that puzzled me.

I sprang on the front of the hansom, and as he leaned forward to take my instructions I looked into his face. It was Jingle. The prophecy of my sick friend had been fulfilled.

"Jingle!" I exclaimed.

"The same—at your service," he replied.

"Well, look here, Jingle, I can't stop to talk now, I have important work to do."

I gave him the address I desired to be taken to, and very quickly I was landed there.

I handed my card to the man who answered the bell and was shown in.

A few minutes elapsed and Miss Harding came to me.

As she entered the room I noticed that her eyes were red as though with recent weeping, but all my sympathies were with my friend.

Brusquely I plunged into my subject.

"Miss Harding," I began, "Mr. Barber is dangerously ill and you are the cause of it."

It was a brutal speech, but I felt savagely inclined, so I continued:

"I thought it only right you should know the effects of your action."

"Has he sent you to me?" she inquired.

"No," I replied, "he knows nothing of my visit."

She touched a small bell on the table and I wondered whether I was about to be shown out.

When the servant came, Miss Harding simply said, "Ask my father to come to me."

"Now what on earth does this mean?" thought I.

Mr. Harding promptly responded to his daughter's summons.

"Father," she said, when we had exchanged greetings. "Alfred is very ill and I am going to him. When I return I shall be wearing his engagement ring, that is if he will permit me."

Turning to me, she continued,

"Mr. Boydell I believe you know the story of my former engagement to your friend and also the subsequent events. When I first held out to Mr. Barber the hope of a renewal of our betrothal, I had no intention of fulfilling it. It was an experiment. During the probationary period my love for him revived, but I was persuaded by my parents that I should be unwise to renew the engagement. They acknowledged his ability, they admired his social qualities; but they were afraid that he was too weak to keep his resolutions and that when his object was achieved, there would come a relapse. Thus my answer was dictated by my head, not my heart. Now take me to him and let me repeat this in his hearing."

"Maud, you will not be so foolish," expostulated her father.

"Father," she replied, "my mind is made up," and she left the room, desiring me to wait.

On her return we were allowed to depart without further remonstrance. We did the journey in silence. On our arrival I left Miss Harding in the outer room, and proceeded to my friend's bedroom. The medical man shook his head as I entered.

"My medicines will do him no good," he said.

"So I thought," I replied, "so I have taken the liberty of calling in another doctor."

"That won't be much use I'm afraid," said he.

"I am inclined to differ with you. My doctor can heal a wounded heart."

"Ah! I understand you now. You may tell him."

I walked to the bedside and lightly touched my friend.

"I am glad you have come back, youngster," he said in a tone that touched me deeply. I decided to act promptly, on the presumption that joy never kills.

"Where is that ring?" I inquired.

"Why, what do you want it for?"

"You had better have it in readiness. Miss Harding is waiting for permission to come in and receive it."

"Youngster, you don't mean it," he almost shouted.

"Yes I do," I replied.

Startling stage revelations next week.

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THE RIFLE SHOT:

A Madman's Confession.

It is midnight. The stealthy step of the restless maniac is no longer heard in the long, cheerless corriders; the ravings of the incurable cannot penetrate the deep walls of the cells in which their despair is immured; even the guardians of the establishment are asleep. Without, what silence! The branches of the immemorial trees hang pendulous and motionless; the last railway train, with its monster eyes of light, has thundered by. The neighbouring cry seems like one vast mausoleum, over which the silent stars are keeping watch and ward, and weeping silvery dew like angels' tears. Only crime and despair are sleepless.

To my task. They allow me a lamp. They are not afraid that the madman will fire his living tomb and perish in the ruins. Wise men of science! Cunning readers of the human heart, your decrees are infallible. am mad. But perhaps some eager individual whose eyes shall rest upon these pages will pronounce a different sentence; perhaps he may know how to distinguish crime from madness.

A vision of my youth comes over me—a happy boyhood—a tree-embowered home, babbling brooks, fertile lawns—a father's blessing—a mother's kiss that was both joy and blessing—a brother's brave and tender friendship—and first love, that dearest, sweetest, holiest charm of all. Oh, God! that those things were and are not! It is agony to recall them.

Pass, too, the brief Elysian period of wedded love. Julia sleeps well in her woodland grave. I was false to her memory.

If my boyhood was happy, my manhood was a melancholy one. A morbid temperament, fostered by indulgence, dropped poison even in the cup of bliss. I loved and I hated with intensity.

To my widowed home came, after the death of my wife, my fair cousin Amy, and my young brother Norman. Both were orphans like myself. Amy was a glorious young creature—my antithesis in every respect. She was light-hearted, I was melancholy; she was beautiful, I ill-favoured; she was young, I past the middle age of life, arrived at that period when philosophers falsely tell us that the pulses beat moderately, the blood flows temperately, and the heart is tranquil. Fools! the fierce passions of the soul belong not to the period of youth or early manhood. But let my story illustrate my position.

Amy filled my lone ly home with mirth and music She rose with the lark, and carolled as wildly and gayly the livelong day, till, like a child tired of play, she sank from very exhaustion on her pure and peaceful couch. Norman was her playmate. In early manhood he retained the buoyant and elastic spirit of his youth. His was one of those natures which never grow old. Have you ever noticed one of those aged men, whose fresh cheeks and bright eyes, and ardent sympathy with all that is youthful and animated belie the chronicle of years. Such might have been the age of Norman, had not—but I am anticipating.

Between my cold and exhausted nature and Amy's warm, fresh heart, you might have supposed that there could have been no union. Yet she loved me warmly and well—loved me as a friend and father. I returned her pure and innocent affection with a fierce passion. I longed to possess her. The memory of her I had loved and lost was but as the breath on the surface of a steel mirror, which heat displaces and obliterates.

I was not long in perceiving the exact state of her feelings towards me, and with that knowledge came the instantaneous conviction of her fondness for my brother, so well calculated to inspire a young girl's love. I watched them with the keen and angry eyes of jealousy. I followed them in their walks; I played the eavesdropper, and caught up the words of their innocent conversation, endeavouring to turn them to their disadvantage. By degrees I came to hate Norman; and what equals in intensity a brother's hate? It surpasses the hate of woman.

In the insanity of my passion—then I was insane indeed—I sought to rival my brother in all those things in which he was my superior. He was fond of field sports, and a master of all athletic exercises; he was fond of bringing home the trophies of his manly skill and displaying them in the eyes of his mistress. He could bring down the hawk from the clouds, or arrest the career of the deer in full spring. I practised shooting, and failed miserably. His good-natured smile at my maladroitness I treasured up as a deadly wrong. While he rode fearlessly, I trembled at the thought of a leap. He danced gracefully and lightly; my awkward attempts at waltzing made both Amy and her lover smile.

But in mental accomplishments I was the superior of Norman; and in my capacity of teacher both to Amy

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and my brother, I had ample opportunity of displaying the powers of my mind.

Amy was gifted with quick intelligence; Norman was a dull scholar. What pleasure I took in humbling him in the eyes of his mistress! what asperity and scorn I threw into my pedantic rebukes! Norman was astonished and wounded at my manner. As he was in a good degree dependent on me, as he owed to me his nurture, sustenance, and training, I took full advantage of our relative position. With well-feigned earnestness and sorrow, I exaggerated my pecuniary embarrassments, and pointed out to him the necessity of his providing for himself, suggesting, with tears in my eyes, that he must adopt some servile trade or calling, as his melancholy deficiencies precluded the possibility of his success in any other line.

Norman had little care for money. Before the fatal advent of Amy, I had supplied him freely with the means of gratifying his tastes; but when I found that he expended his allowance in presents for his fair cousin, on the plea of hard necessity I restricted his supplies, and finally limited him to a pittance, which only a feeble regard for the memory of our indulgent mother forced me to grant.

One day—I remember it well—he came to me with joy depicted in his countenance, and displayed a recent purchase, the fruits of his forced economy. It was a fine rifle; and he urged me and Amy to come and see him make a trial of the weapon. I rebuked him for his extravagance with a sharpness which brought tears to his eyes—but I consented to witness the trial. His first shot centered the target. He loaded again, and handed the weapon to me. My bullet was nowhere to be found. Norman's second shot lapped his first. Mine was again wide of the mark.

Norman laughed thoughtlessly. Amy looked grave, for with a woman's quickness she had guessed at the truth of my feelings. I cut the scene short by summoning both to their studies. That morning Norman, whose thoughts were with his rifle, blundered sadly in his mathematics, and I rebuked him with more than my usual asperity.

Be it understood that my character stood high with the world. I was not undistinguished in public life, and had the rare good fortune to conciliate both parties. I was a working man in many charitable and philanthropic societies. I was a member of a church, and looked up to as a model of piety. As a husband and brother, I was held up as an example. I had so large a capital of character, I could deal in crime to an unlimited amount.

Some days after the occurrence just related, I was alone with my brother in the library.

"Come, Norman," said I, "leave those stupid books. Study is a poor business for a young, free heart like yours. Leave books for old age and the rheumatism."

Norman sprang up joyously. "With all my heart, brother; I'm with you for a gallop or a ramble."

"I'm but a poor horseman, and an indifferent walker," I answered. "What do you say to a little rifle practice? I should like to try to mend my luck."

Norman's rifle was in his hand in a moment, and whistling his favourite spaniel, he sallied forth with me into the bright, sunshiny, autumnal day. We hied to a hollow in the woods where he had set up a target. He made the first shot—a splendid one—and then reloaded the rifle.

"Take care," said he, "how you handle the trigger, you know the lock is an easy one—I am going to have it altered."

And he went forward to set the target firmer in the ground, as his shot had shaken it.

He was twenty paces off—his back turned toward me. I lifted the rifle, and covered him with both sights. It was the work of a moment. My hand touched the trigger. A sharp report followed—the puff of blue smoke swirled upward—and my brother fell headlong to the ground. The bullet had gone crushing through his skull. He never moved.

A revulsion of feeling instantly followed. All the love of former years—all the tender passages of our boyhood—rushed through my brain in an instant. I flew to him and raised him from the earth. At sight of his pale face, beautiful in death, of his long bright locks dabbled in warm blood, I shrieked in despair. A mother bewailing her firstborn could not have felt her loss more keenly, or mourned it more wildly. Two or three woodmen rushed to the spot. They saw, as they supposed, the story at a glance. One of those accidents so common to the careless use of firearms—and I was proverbially unacquainted with their use—had produced the catastrophe. We were borne home, for I had fainted, and was as cold and lifeless as my victim. What passed during a day or two I scarcely remember. Something of strange people in the house—of disconnected words of sympathy—of a coffin—a funeral—a pilgrimage to the woodland cemetery, where my parents and my wife slept—are all that memory records of those days.

Then I resumed the full possession of my senses. Amy's pale face and shadowy form were all that were left of her—my brother's seat at the table and the fireside was empty. But his clothes, his picture, his riding-cap and spurs, a thousand trifles scattered round, called up his dread image every day to the fratricide. His dog left the house every morning, and came not back till evening. One day he was found dead in the graveyard where his master had been laid.

Amy clung to me with despairing love. She would talk of the lost one. She would find every day in me some resemblance to him. Perhaps she would even have wedded in me the memory of the departed. But that thought was too horrible. I loved her no longer.

Friends came to condole with me. Every word of sympathy was a barbed arrow. I could bear it no longer. Conscience stung me, not to madness, but confession. I repelled sympathy—I solicited denunciation. I told them I was my brother's murderer. I forced my confession on everyone who would hear it. Then it became rumoured about that my "fine mind," so they phrased it, had given way beneath the weight of sorrow. I was regarded with fear. A physician of my acquaintance made me a friendly visit, and shook his head when he heard my story. One day this gentleman invited me to ride in his carriage. He left me here. Society believes me mad—that I am not, is to me a miracle.

Oh, ye wise ones of the earth—legislators of the land—would ye avenge the blood that has been spilt by violence on the ruthless murderer, would ye inflict punishment upon him, spare and slay him not. Take down the gallows, and in its place erect your prisons doubly strong, for there within their ever-enduring walls of granite, lies the hell of the villain who has robbed his brother of his life.

Tell your friends of Hazel Harlow the Actress.

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The Golden Dwarf

A Sensational Romance of To-Day.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "A Keeper of Secrets," "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS OF "GOLDEN DWARF."

"It is the body of Sir Christopher Dering!"

The words are spoken by a pretty girl—fair-haired, blue-eyed. She stands, horrified, by a grass-grown ditch in a country lane, out of which a great mastiff is climbing. The ditch contains the corpse of a stalwart man—a handkerchief bound over his mouth and nostrils.

Close to there is a strange figure, graceful, well-dressed, even handsome, but with the stature of a boy and the face of an adult. He carries a heavy dog-whip, and stares, fixedly, at the dead body just discovered by his mastiff, Cerberus.

The girl is Esther Carew; the dwarf, Otto Hare, the richest landowner in Derbyshire, and the mystery of Wyresdale, a village in that county. For the first time in fifteen years he has set foot in a public thoroughfare, to attract the attention of Esther, whom he has watched from his park.

Sir Christopher Dering was alive at seven o'clock the preceding day. He and his nephew, Felix, had quarrelled over the latter's love for Esther. Sir Christopher wanted Felix to make a good marriage—the birth of his little cousin Brian has put him out of the succession to the baronetcy. Felix is faithful to the penniless Esther Carew.

Much turns on the whereabouts of Felix on the night before. It appears that he was in Duchester, some miles off, whither he went on business, and spent a night at the theatre. Could he have killed the squire?

Felix in vain protests his innocence.

But the cloud of suspicion gathers around him. Meantime, the child Brian has been kidnapped.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Felix, Darling, Don't Leave Me."

"Do not cry so, Barbara; you, who know him better than anyone else, have the best right to be certain of his innocence."

Esther Carew bent over a despondent yet dainty figure, which, clad in a neat print gown, lay, her face hidden, upon the end of the big lounge by the hearth of the Rosery drawing-room.

"I'm quite sure he—he didn't kill the squire, miss," was the broken answer, and Barbara Preston lifted a flushed countenance to that of her young ally; "but what wrings my heart is not having the ghost of a notion where he can be. I've not slept a wink for nights, miss—since he broke out of the cell at the station—but just sat and watched the garden-gate. I thought, perhaps, he might try to get a word with me by tossing up a pebble at my window. Ted was very romantic, Miss Esther, and would have me show him which it was."

"The course of true love never did run smooth," sighed Esther. "You mustn't despair, Barbara," she added; "a letter may come from him soon. Surely he will write to you when it is safe."

Barbara rose, brushing her chestnut hair out of her grey eyes. She was a pretty creature, trim and active, with all a town maid's grace, in addition to her own vigorous health.

"If Ted Spencer were alive and free, miss," she said, drying her tears, "he would have let me hear it before now. I may have been a bit wilful, but Ted could have been sworn I loved him better than life, miss. He wouldn't have made me suffer like this for want of a line or two, whatever risk he took. I'm afraid some—some harm's happened to him." And Barbara wept again.

Esther stepped closer and put a soft palm on the maid's shoulder.

"Bab," she murmured, "you can trust me. Have you no idea who it was that helped Ted to escape?"

Barbara Preston shook her head.

"No, miss," she answered; "but they did the poor fellow a bad turn, I'll be bound. Mr. Geddes at the chemist's in the High Street says there wasn't enough evidence against him to satisfy a judge, however it might have done a Wyresdale coroner's jury. He'd have left Duchester Assizes without a stain on his character."

She paused, and a look of indecision crossed her shrewd features.

"Miss Esther," she faltered, "it isn't many in Wyresdale believes my Ted guilty of Sir Christopher's murder. I've wondered if—if you oughtn't to hear what's being said about—about——"

"Yes, Barbara," responded Esther Carew proudly; "about whom?"

Barbara coloured and then sobbed.

"I—I can't repeat it, miss," gasped the maid; "you've been a real friend to me and I can't repeat it."

Esther paled.

"I understand, Barbara," she confessed; "you mean about Mr. Dering. He told me himself Sir Christopher and he disagreed over—over something. Felix—Mr. Dering, as a consequence, had to ride to Duchester and give some orders at his bank. He had arranged with his uncle to go abroad."

The speaker closed her lips tightly for a moment and then went on.

"He was detained and stayed in town for the night, so—so he could not have been responsible for Sir Christopher's murder."

"You believed in my Ted, miss," declared Barbara, "and I'll believe in Mr. Dering. But, Miss Ether, folks say nobody but him would have been able to do away with little Brian in such a strange fashion, and that now the squire and his heir are out of the road, Mr. Felix might be made Sir Felix and have the Dering lands by asking the law to consider little Brian dead."

She paused and leaned over the back of the settee.

"Besides," she whispered, "there are those as argue Mr. Dering could have come back that evening and not a soul be the wiser."

A long and shuddering respiration interrupted the sen-

Beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventures next week.

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Mrs. Carew, quick and cool, bore her to the couch, while the Golden Dwarf brought a carafe.

tence. Barbara flung down her duster and leapt forward, to receive the nerveless body of Esther Carew in her arms. The girl had fainted.

Alarmed at the result of her gossip, Barbara supported the delicate frame and drooping limbs to the settee, and would have hastened for water and help. But intelligence returned to Esther's brain, and with it a perception of the dangerous purport her swoon might convey to her attendant. She sprang up unsteadily.

"Don't fetch mamma," she begged; "I'm not ill, Barbara. Only you horrified me, you did, indeed."

"I am sorry, miss," said the maid, and placed a heap of cushions for the tremulous girl; "forgive my bothering you with the nonsense I pick up in the High Street. Don't you pay the least notice to it."

Esther clasped the other's fingers as they hovered around her.

"Barbara," she pleaded, "don't let mamma hear I went off. She—she doesn't like me to think so much of Mr. Dering. I should have such a lecture."

"Bless you, miss!" cried Barbara, "I understand all that. And Mr. Dering is a gentleman and no mistake. The police-officer as was with Inspector Brasher when Ted was arrested told us Mr. Dering couldn't have been kinder. He promised Ted should have every chance to clear himself, and said he didn't think him guilty."

She brought Esther's book to the side of the couch, drew the blind to moderate the heat of the sun, and finished her dusting. At length she halted to put a question.

"Miss Esther," ventured the maid, "who do you imagine did kill the squire? I know it wasn't Ted Spencer, and you know it wasn't Mr. Dering."

Esther Carew fluttered aimlessly the pages of her novel.

"I can't even think, Barbara," she confessed; "but, oh, I do wish they could find out."

There was a rattle of portière-rings at the door, and Mrs. Carew entered, a sheet of notepaper in her hand, her sallow, fretful visage an odd contrast to her smart gown of mauve foulard. Esther got up, staying herself by the settee.

"Ah, you are here, darling," exclaimed her mother, and turned to fix a cold gaze on the maid: Barbara had devoted a sudden and extreme attention to her work. "That will do, Barbara," observed Mrs. Carew sharply; "you may finish your dusting later."

Barbara made a wry mouth—unseen by her mistress. She detested Mrs. Carew no less than she feared her, a characteristic of all the Rosery servants. But she obeyed at once and Esther was left alone with her mother.

Startling stage revelations next week.

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"I have been draughting the list of guests for Mr. Hare's garden party," said Mrs. Carew. "It is plain we must invite the Derings, though, of course, thanks to Sir Christopher's death, not to mention Brian's disappearance, none of them will be there."

Esther tottered rather than walked from her place to the French window.

"I don't care what you do, mamma," she rejoined wearily. "Mr. Hare intrusted the affair to you, he can hardly criticise your conduct of it."

"I must play my cards well, though," answered Mrs. Carew, reviewing the files of pencilled names; "it is a great thing for me to be, a whole day, hostess at Wyresdale Park. Really, yours was a most fortunate encounter with Mr. Hare. Gracious, child," she broke off, "how white you look. Are you indisposed?"

Her daughter glided out on to the verandah, the sunbeams dancing in her fair locks and sparkling in her blue, dilated orbs.

"No, mamma," she said; "it is hot and I am dizzy. I will get a breath of air, if there is one stirring, and come back again."

"Don't catch a chill then, pet," warned Mrs. Carew as she sank, with her list, into the luxurious lounge; "what should I say to Mr. Hare if you proved unable to grace a function that is practically given in your honour. I am glad the Derings will be away. Felix Dering's presence in the *rôle* of discarded lover would have been ridiculous, and by this time Mr. Hare's overtures are beyond a doubt."

Esther struggled hard for self-control.

"I have not discarded Mr. Dering, mamma," she objected, clinging to the painted frames of the tall casement, "and I wish I had never met Mr. Otto Hare. Tiny as he is, I dread and hate him. You could not persuade me to marry him, no, not to save my life."

And this concise statement delivered, Esther beat a retreat.

Mrs. Carew saw her graceful figure flit athwart the verandah, dart through the garden, and vanish in her favourite corner of the shrubbery. The keen, selfish gaze of her mother followed her flight.

"Esther has more will than I looked for," confessed Mrs. Carew; "she must not be hurried. Would to Heaven Felix Dering would leave Wyresdale; she will not be tractable while he is in reach."

"Mr. Otto Hare!" announced Barbara, acidly, from the door.

Mrs. Carew started up; a diminutive form, exquisitely groomed, superbly tailored, had just gained the apartment. The mistress of the Rosery advanced to greet her caller.

"Pardon this unseasonable visit," said the Golden Dwarf, and bowed low; "but I have just recollected, Mrs. Carew, that a recent proceeding of mine may seem, to you, not quite in correct taste. Miss Carew honoured me so far as to accept a little mare to which she took a fancy. I forgot myself sufficiently to send her down without seeking your permission. I offer you a thousand apologies."

Mrs. Carew smiled, yet a shrewd light illuminated her expression.

"You are most scrupulous, Mr. Hare," she assured him; "but so valuable a gift——"

"Should not be tendered or received without due consideration," said Otto Hare. "It is for that reason, Mrs. Carew, that, on reflection, I hastened here to repair my error."

He motioned his hostess to a seat and placed himself beside her.

"I am not fond of admitting my defects," he continued; "but I should be a vain fool if I did not recognise that, as a wooer, I am at some disadvantage. Yet it was as a wooer I first sought the Rosery; it is as a wooer I hope to seek it in the future."

The Golden Dwarf coughed and cleared his throat.

"Mrs. Carew," he said, "I love your daughter, Esther. Can you, will you, consent to regard me as a possible son?"

The mistress of the Rosery wrestled with a spasm of delirous joy. Fifty thousand a year and the finest estate in Derbyshire had been deposited, by that brief sentence, at her child's feet.

"Mr. Hare," she conceded, "your proposal flatters both Esther and me. I will not pretend that I have been blind to your liking for her, or that I have not regarded it with entire satisfaction; but, as you admit, you have merely put your suit on a correct basis. It would be indiscreet to approach Esther yet."

Otto Hare assented by a gesture. He was on the point of answering when a slender outline crossed the verandah and stepped in at the French window. Esther had returned.

"Ah, Esther, dear," said her mother, "I have a surprise for you. Mr. Hare has been good enough to pay us a morning call."

The girl faced about, the advent of the Golden Dwarf always disturbed her. Otto Hare proffered a small hand, muscular, though delicate as a child's. Esther touched it reluctantly, and then, mastered by the heat, Barbara's news, and her loathed contact with the Golden Dwarf, fainted once more.

Mrs. Carew, quick and cool, bore her to the couch, while Otto Hare brought a carafe. As the drops of water splashed on Esther's pallid skin she parted her lips to utter an appeal.

"Felix, darling," moaned the girl, "don't leave me!"

The glances of Mrs. Carew and the Golden Dwarf spoke volumes. Mrs. Carew seized and pressed her visitor's hand.

"Do not let her recover and see you," she whispered. "You may trust me; I am devoted to your interests."

Otto Hare kissed her withered fingers theatrically and strode from the room, not waiting for Barbara to escort him.

A few seconds the Golden Dwarf paused on the gravel kerb before the spider phaeton dashed up, Kraft driving, a groom in the rumble.

"You've been quick," he said; "I saw you from the corner of the High Street."

Hare climbed in.

"You can walk home," he told the groom bluntly, and the man descended. His master grasped the reins and whipped the cobs into a desperate trot. As they flew along the Golden Dwarf addressed himself to the elephantine frame that occupied the space by him, its enormous bulk tilting to the near side the finely-poised carriage.

"Kraft," he hissed, "we must get rid of him."

"Who?" queried the huge German.

"Felix Dering," snarled Hare; "who else, you sleepy Deutscher? Didn't you swear I should have the girl? There is no other way. Rack your fat brains for a plan, can't you?"

"I do not need to," said Kraft slowly, cutting a Havana, "while you went to flatter the lady's mamma, I thought—and not fruitlessly." The German felt for a battered match-box and lighted his cigar. "I go to London to-night, Otto," he added, "to lay a train, a trickle of unseen gunpowder a hundred and fifty miles long, between Wyresdale and—and Pimlico."

The Golden Dwarf surveyed his companion; a curious furrow had spread from cheek to cheek of Joseph Kraft. It suggested a kind of mirth—mischievous, intelligent, fantastic.

"Do you know, Kraft," said Otto Hare with a shudder, "there are moments when I could believe you to be the very deuce!"

"Adventures of an Actress" next week.

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CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Schwartz is Surprised.

"No more of that, Judith, I am deep enough in the mire already; but what's a taste of penal to the white cap and the noose."

As he spoke Neal Garland thrust his soiled fingers between his throat and his crumpled linen to ease off the pressure of his collar; it might have been bent on strangling him prematurely. He had grown pale and his mouth twitched.

Judith sneered.

"Calm yourself, my pusillanimous brother," she said, "I won't press the point. It's unusual for you to admit cowardice, yet you are too much of a bully not to be a dastard at heart. However, since you won't adopt the short way, what do you propose doing to rid us of this?"

She touched lightly with a small foot the prostrate figure of the slumbering Brian Dering.

Neal gazed at her; his pinched features betrayed a reluctant admiration.

"You're a tiger-cat, Judith," he muttered. "I fancied you'd something of the sort in you, but curse me if I thought you'd quite so much of it. Listen, I'm not scrupulous when a grim bit of work provides the sole chance of safety. Here violence is absurd; Mrs. Schwartz will teach the young dog to forget his name and drop his aristocratic manners. When it's prudent we'll slip him into the East-end, to a baby-farmer, and he can be worked off in quiet."

Judith shrugged her shoulders.

"A cur's trick," she commented, "but a clever cur at that. Well, employ your own methods; you know the sewers of society better than most. What about your awkward colleague, the one-armed sailor?"

"Keep him satisfied as best you can," retorted Neal. "Tell him he shall share the proceeds when we get Felix Dering fairly in our clutches. Persuade him he must be patient."

"And you really intend to let the brute blackmail you?" queried Judith, her lip curled by a sudden disdain.

Neal Garland frowned.

"Not I," he declared. "Perhaps Foley will meet with an accident, perhaps I shall be at the back of the said accident. Go slow, Judith, you women are a reckless lot."

Judith put down her veil and folded her cloak about her.

"I suppose I shall understand you ultimately," she confessed; "but you seem to me at present a strange mixture of daring and indecision."

Her brother grinned.

"It's my patent," he replied, "and it's kept me off the gallows so far. *S-sh!* the kid's awake."

Brian had, indeed, stirred and sat up. His glance fell on Judith and he sprang to his feet, dropping the kitten in his delight.

"It's Miss Garland!" he exclaimed; "dear, dear Miss Garland, take me away, please take me away!"

The woman evaded him, but the boy clung to her skirts. Angered, Judith Garland wrenched them out of the childish fists, and, bidding Neal adieu with a nod, hastened from the room.

The door that had closed behind her swung open, and the stout proportions of Mrs. Schwartz sailed into the apartment. Seeing her, Brian retreated precipitately to his hassock near the old-fashioned steel fender. Mrs. Schwartz sank into a chair and fanned herself with a newspaper which lay convenient to her grasp.

"Your sister's a credit to the Garlands, Neal, my man," she observed; "are there any more of you at home?"

"Dash it, Keturah," growled Neal, "you've been listening."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Schwartz, and poked her red coiffure into position; "no secrets between friends. Don't you imagine," she went on, "you've bitten off this time rather more than you will be able to chew? You've a sight too many partners for me. Why's Judith in it? She's fetching enough to marry some rich idiot if she wants cash, and not sufficient of a fool to help you from mere sisterly affection. What's her game? You told me precious little but the nipper's name the other night, and I hate half a tale."

Neal Garland scowled.

"Speak low, you forget the child," he muttered, and glanced at Brian, who had returned to his playmate the kitten.

"Let the brat hear," snarled Mrs. Schwartz; "I'll knock it out of his skull when I tackle his education in earnest."

Neal stooped to the ear of the inquisitor.

"If you must have the truth," he explained, lowering his voice, "Judith adores Felix Dering, this child's cousin. She wishes to bring him in to the title and estates and compel him to make her his wife."

Keturah Schwartz wrung her thick palms.

"Heavens!" she cried; "love next! Neal, you're an ass! You'll get me gaoled as sure as eggs are eggs. Work on the cross for money if you will, but don't meddle with the tender passion."

The other brimmed a glass from the bottle of sherry that stood on the table by the tray.

"I'd no choice," he argued; "Judith drew the covert and set the pace. She needed help to dispose of the kid so I joined, on shares. Besides, I am essential to her hold over Dering. We could get him swung, if we chose, on my evidence."

Mrs. Schwartz poured herself out a cup of cold tea, diluted by her favourite spirit, gin.

"Mark me, Neal," she said after a prolonged gulp of the blend, "Judy there will dupe you. She's smart and she's bold, while you hate risks. Also, she's in love, and love's a queer thing. Blest if I wouldn't back her to round on you any time for the sake of her dear Felix."

Neal muttered an oath.

"The day she does," he hissed, "she will sign her death-warrant. But you're wrong, Keturah; Judith can't fling me—I'm her trump card."

Mrs. Schwartz emptied her cup and prepared to toss her lace apron over her head. "Positive as ever, my lad," she yielded; "time will show, I'm sick for a nap. Go and scrape your stubbly chin and I'll stand you a shillingsworth of the Aquarium and an oyster-supper to follow."

The person invited to these gaieties winced and his jaw set rebelliously. Yet he lounged towards the exit and disappeared on to the rattle-trap landing. Keturah Schwartz composed herself beneath her apron; soon her regular, stertorous respirations announced that she slept.

The tiny baronet, thus ignored, gained the window, and pondered the squalid panorama of the mean street below. The yellow sunshine irradiated his tear-stained features and patched garments, the tortoiseshell kitten purred gravely against his bosom. In the thoroughfare outside children ran and shouted, lost in their boisterous sport. Brian watched them from a corner of a cracked pane.

As he stood there a gentle touch distracted his attention. He turned and saw the sympathetic countenance of Louisa, the slatternly servant that had given him the sweets. She held in her fingers a couple of sponge-cakes.

"Poor lamb," she murmured, "you didn't have much tea, I'll be bound. Could you eat these? I had to come up for the tray, and I allowed she'd be dozing."

"Thank you very much," faltered the little baronet. "You are kind, Louisa; but I wish I could go home. Why would not Miss Garland take me home with her?"

"Who is Miss Garland?" whispered Louisa, keeping a vigilant espionage on the figure of her snoring mistress.

Tell your friends of Hazel Harlow the Actress.

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Brian broke a piece of his cake for the tortoiseshell kitten.

"She is my mother's companion," he said. "She was here just now. Please," he broke off, "I should like a drink of milk."

The girl brought him the jug from the table and the child swallowed what was left of the fluid. Tears trembled on Louisa's lashes as she carried the vessel back again. For this purpose she had to approach Mrs. Schwartz. To her horror the lace had been twitched somewhat aside, and a human orb, large, bloodshot, malignant, was studying her. Louisa dropped the milk-jug and recoiled.

Mrs. Schwartz chuckled.

"Be off, you inquisitive, sentimental huzzy," was her advice, "and don't *prowl*, or I'll lose something and have you arrested."

A knock suspended Louisa's retort, a triple knock that echoed from the distant hall to the top of the stairs. The servant hastened to answer it.

A moment later a heavy step creaked down the passage, mounted the steep flight, and reached the parlour door. A massive bulk rolled in, straw-hatted, frock-coated, spectacled. It was Joseph Kraft.

The smile died out of Mrs. Schwartz's face, the quivering mirth from her loose limbs. She gasped, and passed her hand over her eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Message in Scratched Letters.

"And so things are just being permitted to slide, Mr. Brasher. A fine state of affairs when a baronet, justice of the peace, and lord of the manor is murdered on the high road and nobody is punished for it."

Archibald Geddes twisted his big brown moustache and regarded provokingly the stalwart police-inspector. Mr. Brasher leaned against the glass-fronted counter of the chemist's shop and played with the scent sachets that formed a small pile on it.

"Your conclusions are not justified, Mr. Geddes," he said; "our best attention is still given to the events which preceded, and followed, the death of Sir Christopher. It is just eight days, almost to an hour, since the squire's body was discovered, and if our researches have not yet proved successful—to your knowledge, Mr. Geddes, to your knowledge!—we may claim a reasonable time in which to make them."

The assistant came round, lowered the awning, and remained in the public portion of the shop. He had a quill between his teeth and chewed it thoughtfully.

"Any word of Spencer?" he queried.

Michael Brasher coughed.

"Official reticence apart," said the Inspector, "I may

"It's Miss Garland! Dear, dear Miss Garland, take me away, please, take me away!"

Beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventures next week.

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confess that we have not got upon a valid clue as to his whereabouts. The secret is uncommonly well kept—for Wyresdale. I would sacrifice half a y ar's pay to recapture the fellow; he has put a black mark against me in the books of the force."

"No idea as to who helped him from outside?" demanded Geddes: "those bars were neatly taken out, Brasher."

Brasher shook his head.

"You're discreet, Mr. Geddes," he owned, "and I will admit that there, at least, we are dished, clean dished! I feel it; Michael Brasher's professional self-esteem is cut to the quick. Any suggestion, even the slightest, would be gladly received. You are a clever theorist, Mr. Geddes; does no probability occur to you?"

Geddes smiled and twisted his moustache till it threatened to curl from his cheeks and lip.

"I am taking an interest in the case," he admitted, "but I prefer to work alone."

Brasher rubbed a pair of great palms together.

"I could have you watched," he threatened.

The Scotchman tapped his forehead.

"I conduct private detective operations in here," he declared; "by ratiocination. You can't post a constable in my brain, Brasher. Go along with you, unless you wish to make yourself ridiculous by arresting me on suspicion."

Michael Brasher sighed and took his tall frame and large reflective face across Caleb Forester's business premises. In the High Street he met the chemist's daughter and bowed low. The rush of colour to his swarthy complexion showed that the Inspector's romance still weighed upon his heart.

Connie stopped and extended her little hand. Mr. Brasher accepted it as though it were some fragile flower.

"I called to see your father," he observed, "but he is out, they tell me, so I had a chat with Mr. Geddes. Will Mr. Forester be at the Wheatsheaf?"

Constance Forester blushed.

"I'm—I'm afraid he will," she stammered. "Mr. Brasher, you'll be sure not to let there be trouble if—if father should get arguing one day when he's had too much. He grows so excited, and a policeman might be rough or impatient. You'll protect him, won't you—for my sake, Mr. Brasher?" she added, bringing her natural coquetry to the support of her filial affection.

The Inspector retained the small fingers.

"Duty is duty, Miss Connie," he said, and breathed hard.

Connie snatched her hand away.

"I beg your pardon," she snapped; "I thought you were a friend of mine." And hurling this shot into the Inspector's magazine left him without more ado.

Michael Brasher walked on, a sorrowful, blue-coated form.

"It's hard," he muttered, "that I, who would give my life to win the little lass, should be driven to plot against her peace; and no Victoria Cross or glory for it, either."

He pushed on, grumbling in his stiff, dark beard, towards the open country at the foot of the quaint thoroughfare. The sound of a horse's hoofs aroused the Inspector from a distasteful reverie, and he glanced up to behold Felix Dering, mounted on his chestnut hunter. The young rider's seat was nerveless, his gazed abstracted.

Mr. Brasher stepped into the road to salute. Felix drew rein.

"I've some news for you, sir," said the Inspector, and fixed a keen survey on the gallant countenance above him. "We've been dragging the Black Pool, as you wished."

Felix gripped at the rein.

"Have you discovered any—anything?" he faltered.

Brasher nodded.

"I'm keeping it quiet for a while," stipulated the Inspector; "it's better so. But the fact is, sir, we hooked up a paper parcel. The contents were a water-worn stone and a little flannel night-gown, with a monogram on the collar, 'B.D.'"

"Great Heavens!" cried Felix; "the child must have been kidnapped and the garment discarded!"

"So I conclude, sir," said Brasher; "I had just that to report, sir. We are prosecuting our inquiries in every direction but without effect at present."

Felix bit his lip.

"Brasher," he murmured, "the rumour you mentioned to me—that I was responsible for the disappearance of my tiny cousin—would thrive on the discovery you have made."

"It would, sir," conceded the Inspector; "and unless you can track the boy and restore him you will not be able to choke the slander."

"I am glad, at all events," said the rider of the chestnut, sadly, "to hear you term it a slander, Brasher."

"Slander it is, sir," responded Michael Brasher, with dry point, "till it be proved."

He saluted again, and was about to continue his walk when he halted, struck by an idea.

"Excuse me, sir," he added, patting the chestnut lingeringly, "but I believe you are well-affected towards Caleb Forester, the chemist in the High Street. You gave him a lift bytimes, the gossips say."

"A mere trifle," answered Felix; "the poor beggar collapsed under the loss of his wife, took to drink, and couldn't meet a quarter's rent. I played the good fairy so far as his landlord was concerned. I fear no beneficent spirit will cure him of the passion for liquor he acquired in his efforts to drown his grief. Has he been falling into your clutches?"

"Hardly," said Brasher, "but he talks in his cups. A dangerous habit, don't you think so, sir?"

Felix stared.

"I shouldn't imagine Caleb had any secrets to blab or to preserve," he decided.

The Inspector mumbled an incoherent comment, gained the kerb, repeated his soldier-like farewell, and strode away.

Felix Dering gasped and roused the chestnut to a canter. Lost in meditation, he reached the avenue which led to Dering House, trotted up it to the stables, and stalked thence through the raftered hall to his own chamber. On the staircase a figure passed him, shrinking away with a painful convulsion. It was Lady Dering, pale, wide-orbed, distraught. Felix shuddered.

"I alone stand to profit by the blows that have stricken her," he sighed; "what wonder if she has come to shun me. Heaven knows how soon she will doubt me also."

In his pleasant chamber he flung himself into a wicker chair and trifled with the hunting-crop he had brought up from the stables. Its handle had been formed by a perfect length of Malacca, once magnificently polished.

"Now why," pondered Felix, "why did Brasher speak to me of Caleb Forester. 'He talks in his cups, a dangerous habit.' How can that interest me?"

He flipped at the dangling loop of the crop; the end of the cane struck him as unreasonably crushed and scratched. The shape of the scratches caught his attention; they resembled letters. Felix scanned them, revolving the Malacca slowly.

It was not his whip, he perceived suddenly, but one of Sir Christopher's much resembling his. The baronet had carried it on that mysterious last ride, and it had been found beside the squire's dead body, to be brought home along with its owner. What message had it borne unnoticed all these days?

(To be continued.)

Startling stage revelations next week.

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LADY DUGDALE'S DIAMONDS.

By Mrs. J. H. RIDDELL.

Author of "George Geith of Fen Court," "The Senior Partner," etc.

"She was not My Lady then."

Thus Mr. Thomas Walters, the rotund, rubicund, good tempered landlord of that well-known village inn, "The Dugdale Arms," which hangs forth its sign, resplendent with all the colours of the rainbow and a dazzling amount of gold emblazoning, across the green, friend or stranger must pass by, if he wish to reach Oakhill, Lord Dugdale's ancestral seat.

She was not My Lady then, although we often called her my lady, for she had married in order to get as near having a right to be so addressed as an Honourable could bring her; and I name my story "Lady Dugdale's Diamonds" for that reason.

There were plenty of heirs between her husband and the title when we took up housekeeping at Johnesborough, but they are all dead and gone.

Mr. Will, my old master, is now Earl of Dugdale. I have known him hard up for a guinea, and this day he can hold his own with the wealthiest in the land.

He is just the same as ever, though—just the same careless, kindly gentleman we all loved so dearly.

There is much talk in these days about servants caring for nothing and no one, save their own interests and their own selves. For my part I say there always were and there always will be some masters and some mistresses no servant could like.

I never served anyone except Mr. Will, and I can honestly say I would have gone through fire and water for him.

The Honourable William Pattingham—that was his name and title. My father chanced to be one of the tenants on the Oakhill estate, where Mr. Will, an orphan, was brought up by his uncle, the seventh earl; and many a morning we two little lads whipped the trout stream, or surprised puss at an early toilette, or startled the partridges amongst the stubble.

When he grew up he was the most devil-me-care young gentleman I ever did see—always in debt, always falling in love—quite as often falling out of it—in one way the most reckless, restless, extravagant master a man could have had, and yet in another, thoughtful, and occasionally even sad.

"Why did my uncle bring me up to all this, Tom?" he would say sometimes, pointing to the useless and expensive articles he gathered about him. "Why did he not put me to some honest calling? If he had not a living to spare, why could not he have made a lawyer of me? I think, Tom, I might have been Chief Justice myself, issuing urgent invitations to various poor wretches to appear before her most gracious Majesty, instead of having to decline her most gracious Majesty's pressing invitations as best I can. It is enough to drive a fellow mad. I have the tastes, habits, extravagances of ten thousand a year, and I never had but a bare five hundred pounds per annum, which went to the Jews (would the race had never been permitted to leave Babylon) half a century ago, or thereabouts."

That was his style, and a man, no matter how stupid he might be, could not help brightening up under such an employer.

We are very much like horses, a slow one always tries to keep pace with a fast goer—I did. For instance, I did not understand what Mr. Will meant by an invitation to appear before Queen Victoria, till I had read the next writ which my master flung down on his dressing table with an oath, when that little blackguard Simeon—a true descendant of him who, with his brother Levi, is stigmatized in Holy Writ, as "having instruments of cruelty in their habitations"—touched him on the shoulder and asked him, rather pressingly, to spend the evening at Mr. Absalom's in Oursitor Street.

The wretch had contrived to reach even the innermost sanctuary by representing himself as a hairdresser and his man as an assistant.

"Good-bye, Tom," said Mr. Will after I had taken off his dress-coat and helped him on with another, holding out his hand just as if he had been my equal—and by that I knew he felt it dreadfully. "Good-bye, and keep up your spirits. I will disappoint these beastly Jews

"Adventures of an Actress" next week.

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one of these days, if it be even at the expense of an ounce of lead."

And then with a mocking bow, he turned to Simeon and said:

"It is not to your tribe I am alluding, my dear fellow. I fancy it has not been all milk and honey with your branch of the family, and that the rough part of the labour fell to your share."

And so he went—a gentleman, every inch of him—for the last time to Cursitor Street.

You may guess how I felt after he was gone. Every time these fellows had him in their clutches, it seemed harder and harder for him to get out of them again.

"I had no idea things were so bad as all this," he remarked.

All he owned had gone long and long before. His relatives would neither give or lend him a shilling. His friends were getting tired, and I could not wonder at it.

One gentleman may be willing to help another at a pinch, but it is not in Christian nature to like spending good money to fill a Jew's coffers.

I sat down in the dressing room he had just left, with his clothes littered about as he had thrown them off, and wondered where we could turn for help—wondered till I grew tired with casting about in my mind whether there was one left who would see him out of this trouble, and if so, where that one ought to be looked for.

My head was young then, but it grew giddy reckoning up, or rather trying to reckon up, what he owed, and how the tangle was ever to be unravelled, when who should walk in but a lawyer who had seen Mr. Will through with a few bad scrapes.

Though on the last occasion he had vowed he would never advance another sixpence, still my heart leaped into my mouth for joy at sight of him.

"Your master is gone to Berkeley Square, Walters, I suppose," he began. "I saw the countess was entertaining as I passed, but I thought I would take my chance of finding him dressing, and late, as usual. Will you tell him he had better keep out of the way for a little while? Marston is going to arrest, and two or three more will follow suit. Thought he would like to know. What an extravagant sinner it is," he added, looking at the array of articles on the toilette table; and he would have gone with that, but I shut the door and implored him to listen to me.

Perhaps I was wrong to talk so freely of things that I only knew in confidence; but I could not help it. I loved Mr. Will with all my heart, and those Jews, with their evil faces, and heavy gold chains sprawling over their gaudy waistcoats, and huge rings on their dirty fingers, had filled me with a disgust and hatred that I could not have expressed in words.

Although he happened to be a lawyer, Mr. Perrin was a gentleman. As a rule, I do not think much of lawyers and such like; but they say every rule has its exception, and Mr. Perrin was an exception to mine.

I think he must have been fond of Mr. Will, too. Lawyers, even the worst of them, I have noticed, entertain a sort of sneaking fondness for wild characters, for reckless, improvident chaps, such as Mr. Will used to be. It is the redeeming point about them. There may be a providence about it, too, as there is about a mother being fondest of her lame, or blind or imbecile child.

Anyhow, it was not for the money he got out of Mr. Will, his lawyer looked after his affairs then. He is making a good thing of the Earl of Dugdale's estates now; but Lord! which of us then ever dreamed he would some day reign at Oakhill?

I, for one, never could have served him as I did, with a perfectly single heart, had such a change seemed

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probable, or even possible. 'He was a poor master, and I a poor servant, and he made me his friend, and I loved him, for all he was the Honourable William Pattingham and I Tom Walters; and I think, for the same reason that I was fond of Mr. Will, Mr. Perrin liked him too.

With a very grave face he listened to what I had to say, and then he remarked:

"I had no idea things were so bad as all this comes to, Walters."

Then I made answer:

"Sir, they are worse; and you would think so, too, if only in a minute, so to speak, I was able to remember all about everything."

"You have remembered enough," he said, and sat for a minute quiet.

Then he got up to go, but stopped to observe:

"I wish your master would follow my advice."

"He would follow anything, sir, that meant ease of mind and a berth in the colonies," I was bold enough to reply.

"Following my advice would mean ease of mind and a comfortable life in England."

"Ah! sir, I don't think his pride would let him do that," I answered, for I thought Mr. Perrin wanted my master to pass through the Court, and I knew it would go sorely against the grain to have such a proposal even made to him.

It was not the fashion then, as it is now, for noblemen to shuffle off their debts in that way like any butcher or greengrocer; and it may be that very idea of its being supposed Mr. Will could so demean himself made me speak quick and sharp, but Mr. Perrin only laughed and said:

"His pride did not stand in the way of his getting into debt, and ought not to stand in the way of his getting out of it; it is not so much his pride though, as his prejudices."

I looked in a dictionary after he went away, to learn what he meant by the last word, but the dictionary explanation did not help me.

Next day he came again.

"Marston has been paid," he said, "and your master has left Cursitor Street, but I have advised him not to come back here until an arrangement can be effected with the tribes of Israel, so if you put up some of his clothes I will take them with me."

"Can't I go to him, sir?" I asked.

"No, you had better stay where you are and answer questions. All you know about Mr. Pattingham is that he was arrested last night and that you have not heard from him since. You need not mention my name in connection with his affairs."

"No, sir. Please give my duty to Mr. Will, and I hope he won't be long away."

"If he follows my advice he will never come back here," said Mr. Perrin.

But Mr. Will did come back. Months after that night when Simeon arrested him, he walked into his rooms as if he had only left them an hour before.

"Yes, Tom, I am free," he said, in answer to my awkward expression of delight at seeing him once more, "and yet I have lost my liberty—there's a paradox—at least I shall lose it at half past eleven to-morrow morning."

Still I was so stupid I did not see his meaning.

"Oh sir," I exclaimed, "I was in hopes all that was over."

"All what was over?" he repeated; then burst out laughing. "Oh, the Simeon and Levi business. So it is, Tom. No more arrests, unless I am a greater idiot than I take myself to be—no more royal invitations, unless they are dated from Windsor Castle—no more credit—everything is to be cash on delivery for the future with Will Pattingham—ironically styled The Honourable."

"Have you had any money left you, sir?" I asked; "or," I added, a light breaking in upon me, "is it——"

"Yes," said Mr. Will, "it is——"

My heart leaped into my mouth, and then fell back again like a leaden weight. I tried to wish him joy—I tried to look cheerful and pleasant, but it would not do. He saw the news had shocked me, and so he went on:

"All men must die, you know, and I suppose most men must marry, at any rate I must, therefore it behoves me to make the best of a—good bargain," he finished after a pause so slight, that many a one might not have noticed it. "The lady is wealthy, generous, kind; my people are delighted with the match, they make no objection on the score of family—why, indeed, should they? Her grandfather on the one side bore a name better known throughout England than that of Pattingham-Smith. Her grandfather on the other side came of an almost equally old race—he was a Jones. Her father thought the two names too good to be divorced, and so dubbed himself 'Smythe-Johnes,' after which he died, and bequeathed his cognomen and fortune to his only daughter Amelia Selina Annabella, whom I am to marry to-morrow."

"Are—are you going to take me with you, sir, on the wedding trip?" I asked.

"I am afraid not," he said, with one of his old queer smiles. "You like a pretty face, Tom, and it would not suit for you to be flirting with my wife's maid. The future Mrs. Pattingham has strict ideas, and might not approve of any indiscretion. There, I declare the fellow has tears in his eyes. Tom, do you think that my marriage is going to part us? Did you think me such a cold-blooded monster as to contemplate flinging over an old friend—for you are my friend?

"I have been considering into what good berth I can slip you in the new establishment, and have decided that you shall be butler. You must, therefore, go down to Johnesborough, and have everything ready for our return.

"We are not to reside much in London. I mean to become a model country gentleman. I shall interfere with the poor people, and see that the children learn their catechism.

"Do you know, my grandmother is so charmed with my prospects that she has sent me her diamonds to present to the bride. They came to her, not through the Pattinghams, but some of her own more august progenitors. They would have been a catch for the Jews in the good old times—eh, Tom?"

I answered him with what spirit and heart I could muster. The old times had often been bad enough; but it seemed to me the new times were promising to be worse still.

"You will let me know where you are going to be married, sir?" I asked after awhile. "I should like ——"

Beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventures next week.

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"To be present when the bolt is drawn," he interrupted. "Well, I don't know that there need be any difficulty about the matter. The sacrifice is to take place at St. George's, of course; and—yes, you may come—only, Tom, my lad, if you feel surprised at anything in the ceremony, try not to look so, there's a good fellow, and keep a still tongue afterwards," and with that he held out his hand, and I—well, you can think what you please about it; but we had been boys together, and I loved him, and he seemed going away from me for ever.

So I kissed it, and then broke out crying like a woman—or a fool.

"Cheer up, Tom," he exclaimed, "when we come back you will know Mrs. Pattingham for the true, honest, amiable creature she is. She has been liberality itself to me, and I only hope I may be able to make her as good a husband as she deserves. I mean to try. Heaven knows I do," he added, and then he went off humming an opera air; and I thought I had seen the last of light-hearted, easy-going Mr. Will.

The next morning I thought so more than ever. As the bride came down the aisle, leaning on her husband's arm, I caught a glimpse of her face for the first time.

I knew then the part of the ceremony he imagined would surprise me, and I turned my face towards the wall that no one might see the amazement I knew was written on it.

She looked old enough to be his mother. She was ugly enough to have been burnt for a witch in the days when witches were burnt. She had no figure—she was no shape—she had no presence; and her tall, handsome, winning, gracious, well-born husband had sold himself for life to this woman to get out of the hands of those Jews.

Though I was in a church, I prefixed a word to Jews that I won't repeat here; and meeting Simeon in Piccadilly, on my way home, I had much ado to keep from knocking him down.

I wish I had now. The will to do it and the opportunity never dovetailed so neatly together afterwards.

But it is the story of the diamonds I was to tell, you remind me. Patience, I am coming to that. You have now the main threads of it in your hand. I served the Honourable William Pattingham, who, marrying Miss Smythe-Johnes, promoted me to be butler at Johnesborough.

To Mrs. Pattingham, Lady Dugdale—the Dowager I mean—presented her wonderful diamonds, which Mr. Will sent to Rundell and Bridge to be reset. His wife wanted to wear them on the occasion of her presentation at Court. Thus the diamonds were at the jewellers, I at Johnesborough, and Mr. Will and his wife on their wedding-tour.

It was very kind of Mr. Will, giving me the butler's place at Johnesborough; but I could not help wishing he had arranged that I should learn my duties before going there.

When a stern and stately housekeeper, who had been at Johnesborough in the times of Smythe-Johnes, addressed me, I wished my shoes were big enough to hide in. However, I took heart of grace, after awhile, and gave her my confidence—told her how I had been Mr. Will's own man—how of his goodness he had chosen me to fill the post of butler; how I knew little or nothing of what a butler was expected to do; and, to wind up all, how thankful I should be if she would give me a few hints.

Over her spectacles the old lady looked at me for a minute. Then she said, "Young man, you will do; you are modest and ingenious." (Somehow it seemed to me I was then always running up against people who used long words). "I will instruct you myself. Few persons, male or female, know more of the nature of a butler's duties than I."

Which was quite true. Mrs. Barrett deserved all the praise she was good enough to bestow on herself.

By the time Mr. Will returned, I had learned enough not to disgrace his recommendation. Indeed my Lady herself seemed surprised at my progress, for she said to me one day, "I had no notion, Walters, you had so correct an idea of the duties of your position. Even my dear father could have found no fault with the manner in which you discharge them."

This was high praise from her Ladyship. The doings of Johnes Johnesborough seemed, in those days, right in the sight of his daughter—as right as her own doings do now.

No one ever can tell how a marriage will turn out. I am sure, had any person told me, that day in St. George's church, I should some day consider my master had done a good thing for himself in taking Miss Johnes for better for worse, I must have laughed out in very scorn and bitterness; but the pair had not been long back at Johnesborough before I began to believe she was the very wife for Mr. Will.

If she was fussy and fidgety—and who could doubt her being both?—Mr. Will was too much the other way. She kept things together, she prevented his getting into debt again, she led him into paths of respectability so fenced in by ideas, and traditions, and responsibilities, and proprieties, that I think it would have been next to impossible for any man to break bounds, even had he wished to do so. But Mr. Will did not wish. For the first time he had a chance given him of doing well, and he was not above taking advantage of it. I know he felt his wife had given him all she had in her power to bestow, and that it behoved him to try to make her some return.

When he married her there was not a morsel of love on his side, but it grew. Day by day, month by month, year by year it went on putting out buds and shoots, and now I doubt if there is a man in the county fonder of his wife and the mother of his children than William, Earl of Dugdale.

And as for the Countess, I think she gets younger every week, and she is not half so plain as she was when she relieved Mr. William of his debts, and took it in hand to make a steady, respectable, and respected country gentleman of him.

But I am running ahead too fast. When she came home to Johnesborough I did not much care for her, and I liked her ways still less; fussing here, and fuming there; worrying herself about the merest trifles, and nothing to be put out of the regular course even for a moment.

If she had got hold of any gentleman less easy natured and sweet tempered than Mr. Will, she would have driven him, or he would have driven her, mad in three months.

Even Mrs. Barrett confessed that in some things Mrs. Pattingham was difficult to please.

I tried to please her for Mr. Will's sake, and was

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making way in her good graces, when one day there came a letter from some place very far away, where old Lady Pattingham, the Dowager, generally spent three parts of the year, saying she was dangerously ill, and summoning Mr. Will and my Lady to her side.

Mr. Will was her favourite of the whole family. She had done a great deal for him, to my knowledge—paid debts for him often, and given him money, together with a large quantity of good advice, and then, finding that nothing did him any permanent good, she tired, like the best of his friends, and returned the letters he sent her unopened.

Still her heart was with him, everybody knew; and her conduct in the matter of the diamonds proved that she was more than ready to forgive, when once she saw a hope of reformation.

I do not think it occurred to Mr. Will that she had any thought of making him her heir; not so, however, with my Lady. She was not mercenary exactly, and yet she was sufficiently worldly-wise to know it would be folly to throw away the chance of a legacy, and accordingly she would hear of no delay on this occasion, but was even more anxious than Mr. Will to start at once.

Anyhow, to make a long story short, they left Johnesborough the same day the news arrived. In a letter Mr. Will wrote to me from London he said neither his uncle nor the Countess was in London, that he would not wait for the Earl's company, but travel on without delay. The period of his return must be uncertain; but he would send instructions home from time to time.

The door opened, and my friend Mr. Sanders appeared, carrying a lantern cautiously.

Thus, once again we were all quiet at Johnesborough; and mighty dull I found it, after London.

True, one day we were all flung into a state of excitement by a visit from the Earl. Coming up from the North, where he had been staying, he took Johnesborough in his way, and put the footman, who answered the door, into a state of bewilderment by asking to see me.

"Is Thomas Walters here?" inquired his lordship; "send him to me directly;" and without waiting to be asked, he walked into the library, the door of which chanced to be open.

I found the Earl in one of his tempers.

What was the meaning of Mr. Will being sent for, and he not?

"Adventures of an Actress" next week.

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Was not the dying lady his mother, and who could be nearer to her than he? What had Mr. Will said? Did I know who had sent the letter? Had I heard anything of its contents?

Though I was but a servant still, I had known the Earl all my life, and he spoke to me just as freely and as angrily as Mr. Will might have done, if anything had chanced to put him in a passion.

Careless about his papers as about his other concerns my master had tossed the doctor's letter on his table, and left it there; and as I knew he had no secrets from anybody, I gave it to the Earl to read.

It was written in some foreign language, and his Lordship had trouble to make it out; but he managed to do so at last, and then, throwing it down, broke forth again. What was the meaning of their not sending to him?

"The letter may have gone astray, my lord," I ventured to suggest, and my words fell like oil on troubled waters.

It might—it had, here was the solution of the enigma. Of course his mother would send for him. Thus the Earl ran on, ending by saying I was an honest fellow and attached to the family.

The mercury of his temper fell as rapidly as it had risen. His voice resumed its usual tone, his brow cleared, he threw himself into an easy chair and allowed me to get him some refreshment. He praised the vintages loved by the departed Smyth-Johnes, talked to me about Mr. Will and my new mistress, spoke of his own sons, and, in a word, was as pleasant as any gentleman could be. There were some letters for his nephew and for his nephew's wife, and when I mentioned this fact, he "graciously," to quote Mrs. Barrett, offered to take charge of them. Indeed the whole establishment seemed oppressed by the weight of the honour done to it, and appeared satisfied that Miss Johnes had made an exceedingly good investment when she married Mr. Will.

I was treated with more deference after the Earl's visit, and my fellow servants asked me such lots of questions about the Dugdales and Pattinghams, about Oakhill, and my lord's house in town, and the Dowager's place in the country, that I grew sick and tired of the very name of my master's family.

"After all," I thought one morning, "if our old life was anxious, we had variety, at any rate. I do not believe I can stand this much longer."

An interruption was coming to the monotony for which I was little prepared; it came very soon indeed.

That same evening I was walking down the elm avenue which people came from far and near to see, when I met two well-dressed men, who proceeded quietly on without taking the least notice of me.

I could not tell what made me do it, but when they had traversed some twenty yards, I turned and followed.

By the time they reached the house I was close behind them. The hall door stood open, and on the threshold was Catteron, one of the footmen, lazily contemplating the landscape.

To him the strangers addressed themselves.

"Is Mr. Pattingham within?" asked the elder and stouter of the two.

"No, he is not at home."

"When do you expect him back?"

"Can't say; he's gone abroad. The Dowager Countess of Dugdale is ill, and sent for him."

Catteron added this piece of information not out of any civility towards the strangers, whom, indeed he had treated with scant courtesy, but because he never willingly missed an opportunity of speaking of the Dugdales or their titles.

There was a pause—the men, who did not look like gentlemen, though they were well-dressed, exchanged glances, then the elder one inquired:

"Is Mr. Pattington's servant, Walters, here, or has he gone abroad, too?"

"No, he is standing behind you," and thus indicated, I came forward.

"I would like a minute's private conversation with you, sir," said the spokesman, and seeing that Catteron would not go, and that the stranger would not speak before him, I opened the door of a small cloak-room and followed the visitor in.

Directly I had done so he closed the door, and said confidentially:

"This is a mighty disagreeable business, Walters. Had Mr, Pattingham been at home I feel no doubt the matter might have been settled in two minutes; but as it is, I must leave a man here—yes I must."

"You don't mean to say—" I gasped.

"Yes, I do," he interrupted. "Most of his debts were arranged, no doubt; but this one, at any rate, does not seem to have been settled. No doubt the man felt hurt at being left out in the cold. Anyway, he is very bitter and so I'm here; and being here, I must leave a man."

I certainly was no innocent in such matters. I had seen as many writs, and witnessed as many arrests as most men who were not sheriff's officers; and yet the simplest and most timid woman could not have felt more frightened than did I at sight of the writ he handed to me.

The horror of such a thing happening in that house as a man being left in possession, was more than I could bear. Mrs Barrett—the servants—what should I say to them—what explanation could I give?

We might leave the place and the country, Mr. Will and I, after such a disgrace had befallen us; that was what I thought as the stranger pushed me, trembling in every limb, into a seat.

"Let us talk it over, and see what can be done," he said not unkindly. "Mr. Haman told me to ask to see you if Mr. Pattingham chanced to be out. He knew your master would not mind standing a trifle to keep the matter quiet."

"You are from Haman, then," I murmured.

"Yes, and I'll make it straight with him, so as to give you time to get the debt paid. It would have a bad look to seize here; and your master so lately married, too. You had better represent that your master promised to find my man a berth—that he did Mr. Pattingham a service once."

I groaned aloud.

"Come, come, you were man enough in London; don't pull a long face now."

Well, the upshot of it was that he went away and his man stayed.

"Look here," said the latter, as if I was not looking at him; "I'll make things pleasant for you as far as I can. When Mr. Pattingham comes back, you can say a word in my favour, and I am sure, by what I have heard of him, he won't forget I tried to perform a

Tell your friends of Hazel Harlow the Actress.

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disagreeable duty agreeably. Haman gave me a hint of how the land might lie, and I am not a fool."

That he certainly was not. Before three days were over, he was the life of the servants' hall. He won Mrs. Barrett's heart by giving her a specific for corns, and he made love indiscriminately to the housemaids and the cook. They were all expecting him to propose, and I, miserable I, knowing all, had to look on and laugh with the rest.

When I returned one day from the nearest village, Catteron said: "a young gentleman was waiting to see Mr. Walters."

"'Pears to me you have more visitors than Mr. Pattingham hisself," remarked Catteron with a sniff. How it happened I could not tell, but in precise proportion as Mr. Sanders grew in favour, I lost it.

I went into into the library where the young gentleman sat.

"Mr. Thomas Walters?" he said.

"At your service, sir," I answered.

"I have brought Mrs. Pattingham's diamonds, and as my instructions were, in her absence, to deliver them to no one but you, I have waited for your return."

"But," I expostulated, "how does it happen they are sent down here? I understood they were to remain at Messrs. Rundell and Bridge's."

"I know nothing about that," he answered. "My principals had an order to deliver them here, and I have brought them. Be kind enough to sign your name there," and he pushed a paper towards me.

I never told anyone, except Mrs. Barrett, those diamonds had come, they were a weight on my mind.

I slept with the diamonds, and I dreamt of them; what a trouble I had no one suspected; no one unless it might be Mrs. Barrett and Mr. Sanders.

"If I were in your place, Thomas," said the former to me, "I would take the plate and the diamonds over to the bank at Lantree to-morrow."

"I'll take the diamonds at any rate," I answered, groaning inwardly over Mrs. Barrett's want of comprehension.

"If she only knew there was a bailiff in the house it would be a comfort," I considered.

The whole affair was growing too much for me, however; I confessed as much to Mr. Charles Sanders, who was kind and sympathetic as usual.

"I should not sit up late, old fellow, if I were you, to-night; go to bed early, and you will find yourself another man to-morrow."

Which advice I followed.

After only one tumbler of punch, I locked myself in my pantry, where I had latterly slept, resolving that early the next morning I would take my Lady's diamonds to the bank at Lantree.

So great a relief was this resolve to my mind, that I fell into a dreamless sleep, from which I was awakened by a noise as of someone trying my door; then it—the door I had locked—opened, and my friend Mr. Sanders appeared, carrying a lantern cautiously.

"What, Walters, still awake?" he said; then, before I could answer, there came a crashing blow.

When I came to myself the sun was streaming across the pantry, and I could see the strong-room had been broken into and its contents ransacked.

With a groan, I dragged my body into the passage where, a few hours afterwards, Catteron found me.

For days and weeks I lay between life and death, and when I recovered it was to hear from Mr. Will that his grandmother had never been ill; that the whole matter was a preconcerted scheme; that all his debts had been arranged before his marriage; that Mr. Charles Sanders was no bailiff, only a remarkably clever thief, whom the law hoped eventually to catch and punish.

Anything more? Well, yes. Her Ladyship, Mrs. Pattingham, would not believe in my innocence; and, for the sake of peace, I must go.

"Of course, I will do all for you I can. This makes no difference to me, Tom?" my master said, but I turned my head away, sick at heart, wounded to the very quick.

"I might be wrong," so I stated in a note I left for Mr. Will, when I was strong enough to leave Johnesborough, "but I would never knowingly see him again till the diamonds were found."

It seemed a wild goose chase then, but I got on the track of them at last.

There is a story hanging to the finding of the diamonds, too long to tell now.

Suffice it to say, they were found, though not in time for my lady to appear in them at Court.

But she was a just woman, and acknowledged her mistake, and did right by me at last; and so I am fain to confess, gentleman that the Countess of Dugdale is a brave and stately lady, and that she has made Mr. Will a good wife, and that they both installed me landlord of the "Dugdale Arms."

A MAN never gets thoroughly disgusted with love's young dream until he has given a girl a ring, and three days afterwards discovers that she has been to the jeweller's to ascertain its value.

"I DON'T think I shall go abroad on the *Teutonia*," said Mrs. Perkins. "George wants me to, but seems to me they must run her very carelessly. She's always breaking her record."

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Beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventures next week.

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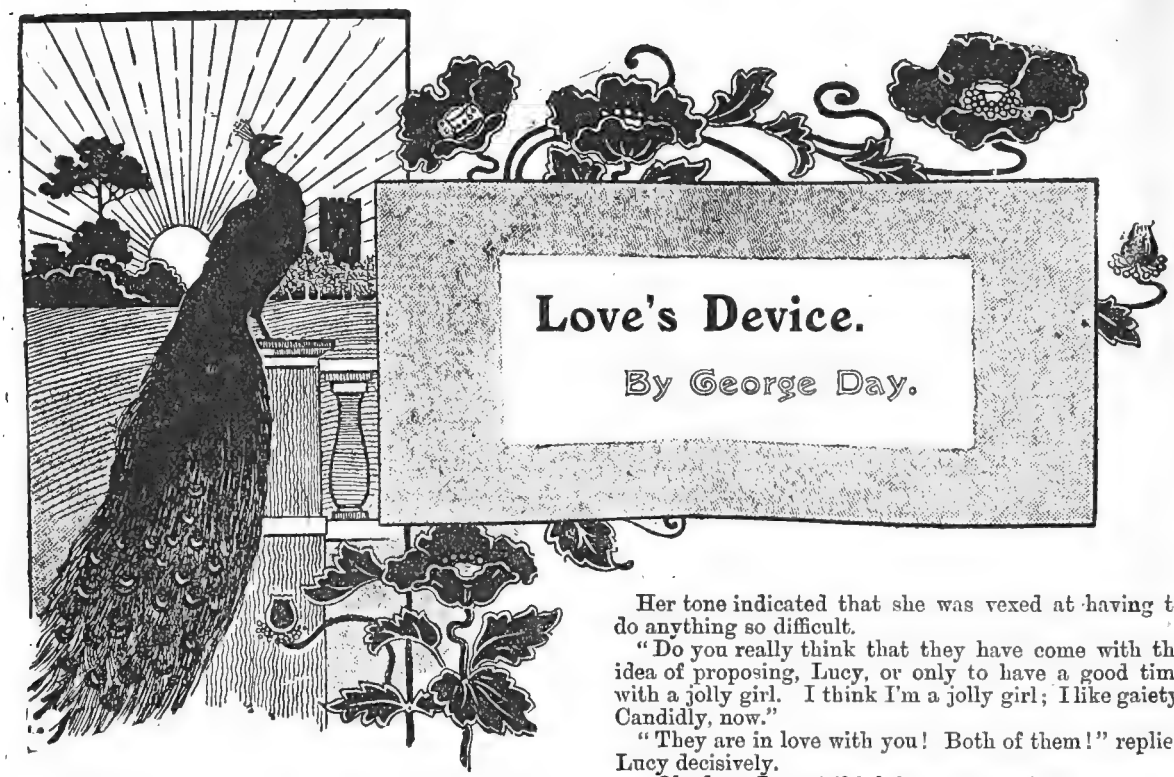

Love's Device.

By George Day.

"I REALLY think I prefer Mr. Reeve. They are both nice and I suppose I must marry some day. I declare it's very horrid of people to talk in that way and say I've been flirting with two men for weeks and spoiling the chance of another girl, or two other girls. Yet that is what Kitty Malins told Julia only the day before yesterday, and it came round to me last night."

Anyone who knew Millie Vince as her cousin Lucy Warren did, would not have accused her of flirting.

She was good-hearted, but shallow and thoughtless; the two men had paid her marked attention for weeks and she had accepted those attentions, and had a most agreeable time, without in the least recognising the significance of the position.

It was her nature to take things lightly; fate had been fairly kind to her, she had an independent income and the opportunity to gratify all reasonable desires. Life was more like a pleasant holiday than a struggle for existence.

Lucy believed that there might be something under the surface, to be awakened by love or sorrow; but certainly there was no indication of it at present.

Millie sat quiet, gazing thoughtfully through the window.

Lucy interrupted the reverie.

"As you say that people are beginning to talk, it is time to come to some decision, Millie—either to stop their attentions or make a choice."

"Yes, I see," murmured Millie.

Her tone indicated that she was vexed at having to do anything so difficult.

"Do you really think that they have come with the idea of proposing, Lucy, or only to have a good time with a jolly girl. I think I'm a jolly girl; I like gaiety. Candidly, now."

"They are in love with you! Both of them!" replied Lucy decisively.

"Oh, dear, I must think it over alone."

This was a hint which Lucy accepted. Millie avoided the young men for nearly a week, and both became nearly distracted; but at the end of that time she had made up her mind that she could not dismiss Albert Reeve, and that if he asked her to be his wife, she would accept.

But her previous behaviour had made both of them uncertain and the proposal did not come, although she endeavoured to show Reeve that she preferred him. Two or three times he had been on the point of expressing his sentiments in the past, but she had always turned it off laughingly, believing he was about to make some jesting pretence. Then she had avoided him for several days.

He was head over heels in love with her, but he was doubtful about her feelings towards him, and concluded that he had better wait a little. Arthur Biron noticed, after a day or two, that Reeve seemed to be favoured and became correspondingly gloomy.

This was the curious situation which Lucy Warren observed and was soon to be called upon to set right.

Lucy occupied the unenviable position of the poor relation. She was Mrs. Vince's niece, the daughter of a sister who had had a hard struggle after her husband's death, and had been comforted on her deathbed by the knowledge that her child would be taken care of by her well-to-do and widowed sister. Mrs. Vince was very kind to her niece, and she was treated in every way as one of the family, but outsiders knew that one girl was

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rich and the other poor, and it affected their manner towards the girl probably without their being quite conscious of the fact.

She was quieter and more profound than Millie, and less stylish in appearance, it naturally followed that she was outshone by her voluble and vivacious cousin.

People fell into the habit of patronising her mildly. When you are poor and quiet, you are likely to suffer in that way by those who do not understand human nature and are higher in the social scale.

"What would do, my dear?" asked the perplexed Millie, throwing herself rather petulantly into an easy chair opposite her cousin. "That foolish Bertie—that's what I call him to myself now—won't take the thing seriously. Here have I been showing him as much as I dare that I—well, don't object to him, and that I object to Biron a great deal more, we'll put it that way, and he won't say anything! What would you advise? You always have good advice to give."

"That's complimentary!" laughed Lucy. "But I can only advise you to wait. Mr. Reeve is no doubt waiting till he is sure of his ground."

"Oh!" exclaimed Millie disappointedly. "Have you nothing better to suggest? I think you must be a little dull this morning, dear."

Lucy flushed, but laughed good-humouredly the next instant.

"Are you absolutely certain that you are in love with him?"

"Positive!" responded Millie, more gravely than was her wont, and Lucy felt that she was speaking with knowledge, from her heart.

"Then I would wait," she repeated firmly.

"Then I won't just wait till he comes to his senses!" asserted Millie, vigorously. "I won't wait his time! I'll make him come to me! A woman has no 'go' who waits and does nothing. I'm going to make him jealous and I want you to help me. I shall flirt—no, I mean I shall be more friendly to Arthur Biron and neglect Bertie, and you will manage to say something to Bertie in conversation that will—oh you know! You are just a wee bit dull this morning, aren't you, dear?"

This remark was characteristic, but it was cool in the circumstances.

Lucy looked grave.

"I would not make a fool of Mr. Biron for the purpose of accomplishing your end," she said earnestly. "Suppose he is—er—likes you; is it fair to make him——"

"You always see things in such a dreadful light!" said Millie, kissing her. "Now you are going to help me by saying something to Bertie while I am being nice to Biron. I'll give you the best evening cloak I can find."

Lucy's book lay open in her lap for a long time after Millie had left her, but the subject was quite forgotten.

"She thinks that a woman who loves a man—who thinks that she can make him happy and be happy with him—ought not to sit still and wait till he comes. She ought to do something to prevent the risk of his going away, to be less happy, perhaps. We women usually wait. We think it wrong to move, even though the inactivity may result in a broken heart. Is she right?"

Lucy found it difficult to answer her own question.

"At least, it is wrong if you make others suffer to accomplish your end," she murmured; "and that is what Millie will do."

The opportunities for meeting were fewer during the following fortnight, and the new tactics could not take effect so quickly as Millie desired, but by that time Reeve was aware that his rival was more in favour and Biron's hopes were rising.

There was a little party and a dance at Mrs. Vince's; the hostess' daughter was fairly impartial and Biron was in her favour, but everybody understood that Reeve was the most favoured, and the latter claimed and received more of her attention than the former.

Reeve stood watching Millie and his rival with a savage expression, and he in turn was watched by Lucy, on whose lips was just the trace of a queer smile.

"I think it is time I earned that evening cloak!" she said below her breath, as Reeve turned on his heel as though to make for the door. "This is a climax and may result in Millie saying 'Yes!' to a proposal from Biron. That must not be! She would marry him solely out of pique, and he——"

She intercepted Albert Reeve on his way to the door and spoke to him in a flippant style that was totally at variance with her usual manner and caused him some surprise.

"I declare, Mr. Reeve, you are quite rude! Here am I, a solitary individual, and you do not attempt to say something nice to me."

"I—er—really, Miss Warren, it is quite unintentional," he stammered confusedly. "Er—can I do anything—are you engaged for the next dance—is there another dance?"

"I think I should prefer a seat in a quiet corner," replied Lucy with a smile.

Reeve bowed and conducted her to a seat. He was confounding her under his breath, for, although she was an amiable girl and "all that sort of thing, you know," she was not his style and he was in no mood to entertain her at this juncture. Why had she come up so inopportunely. He wanted to get away from it all.

"Can I get you anything, Miss Warren?" he inquired rather lamely.

"No, thank you. Sit here, I should like to talk to you."

Still wondering at her altered manner, he did as he was requested. He was startled by her next words.

"Mr. Reeve, why don't you take your fortune at the flood and be carried to happiness. If you are in love with my cousin, why don't you propose to her?"

Reeve turned his eyes slowly to her face and started; it was plain speaking, beyond all doubt! The colour overspread his features, and he noticed that she, too, was colouring.

But she met his gaze without flinching and waited for him to speak.

"Take my fortune at the flood!" he repeated bitterly. "Does that indicate fortunate for me?"

He jerked his head in the direction in which they had last seen Millie and Biron.

"Adventures of an Actress" next week.

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"You speak plainly, Miss Warren, so I will be open with you. I love your cousin, but she——"

"You men are so blind!" interrupted Lucy passionately. But, recovering her self-possession, she continued: "Take my advice and try!"

"I can't get a chance!" exclaimed Reeve, angrily. "Look how Biron haunts her."

He felt angry with everybody and everything, without being able to explain; that is a common sentiment with us all when we have not made the best of our chances and don't like to take the blame on ourselves.

"Suppose I get you the chance?" queried Lucy boldly.

"If you would!" said Reeve eagerly.

Yet, inwardly, he felt a little contempt for this girl. The thought flashed across him that she was a poor relation and—well, people do strange things for money or finery.

"I shall never forget the service, Miss Warren," he went on, meaningly, "and shall always be happy to repay it."

He was rich.

Lucy laughed constrainedly to hide her embarrassment; she understood the significance of his last words.

They separated a minute later. When Lucy found herself alone in her bedroom that night, she covered her burning cheeks with her hands and longed for tears to moisten the hot eyes, but they would not come. She had lowered herself in the eyes of this man, who had as good as offered to pay her. He had treated her as a mercenary, never dreaming of the real motive. Her scheme was more difficult to accomplish than she had supposed. Should she go on? What else might it not entail? Yes? she would go on; to make happy the man she loved, but who was all unsuspecting of that fact!

It had been arranged between Lucy and Reeve that he should call at eleven o'clock on the following morning, this was unusual, for it was a morning generally set apart by Millie for special purposes and, in addition, she never encouraged morning calls. Lucy was about to make the announcement to Millie that she must be "in" to a visitor this time, when her cousin surprised her by telling her that Biron intended to call.

"I suppose he is coming to learn his fate," remarked Millie, with what Lucy mentally described as callous indifference. "I could not put him off; he said he should call in the sort of voice that means 'so you must agree.' Bertie has lost his chance."

"But I hinted to Mr. Reeve," expostulated Lucy, hot and uncomfortable.

"Never mind, dear," said Millie easily. "He can't say anything to you, and you shall have the cloak all the same. I would rather—— But what matters? Biron will make tolerably good husband."

"I don't want the cloak!" flared Lucy.

"Oh, well, you needn't get out of temper!" returned her cousin. "I shall leave you till you get over it." And she swept out of the room.

What time would Biron call? Would he come before Reeve? What must she do? She must save him! She rapidly revolved a plan in her well-shaped head; there was no time to telegraph to Reeve to come earlier, for the simple reason that the morning was advancing, and he would be on his way before the telegram or even a messenger could reach him.

It was a race by two men who did not know that they were racing! Which would win?

A few moments of deep thought, and Lucy had made her plans.

Five minutes to eleven and a ring of the bell! Probably Reeve, a little before his time; if so, the situation was clear. She went into the hall herself to welcome the arrival.

It was Biron!

"Good-morning, Mr. Biron, we are pleased to see you! We are not so fortunate, generally, as to be relieved from the *ennui* that follows the excitement of a dance!"

With a vivacity that was well assumed, Lucy welcomed him and led him to the reception room.

"I am sorry that my cousin is too busy with feminities to make her appearance yet."

Biron replied as cheerfully as his disappointment would permit.

Lucy had to do most of the talking, but she was a good conversationalist. She excused herself for a moment in order "to give an order to a servant." Biron would have been surprised had he heard the order. It was:

"When Mr. Reeve comes, show him into the dining-room and tell Miss Vince that a gentleman wishes to see her in that room. Don't say his name on any account, I wish to surprise her."

Lucy heard the ring that heralded the approach of Reeve, and she kept up a run of talk and laughter so that Biron should not hear the voice. Then she unconsciously allowed the conversation to flag; she was wondering how *they* were getting on.

Half an hour of misery for Lucy, and then Biron arose.

"I suppose that Miss Vince is too much occupied to see me," he observed, striving to hide his irritation. "I was—er—under the impression that it was a kind of—that is, an appointment." He stood irresolute, as if waiting for Lucy to make some move.

"I will see how matters are progressing," said Lucy, feeling that she must do something to make her attitude plausible.

She opened the door and passed out of the room, but before she could close it Biron heard Millie's voice.

"You artful thing! You sent me in there and I did not know it was Bertie. But it's all right, we've both made explanations and amends and all that, and he has gone away quite happy. What a mercy that Mr. Biron didn't come! I absolutely thought I heard him before—five or ten minutes before—the footman gave me the message, your message, I know. I was waiting for poor Biron. Oh, dear! You should have seen the happiness on Bertie's face when I accepted him! Fancy a woman having it in her power to make two men happy!"

Millie rattled on, illogically and gaily, quite careless who might be listening.

Lucy felt paralysed in the hand that held the door-knob and could not shut the door. Biron must have heard all; what would he think?

Millie bounded upstairs like a schoolgirl and Lucy re-entered the reception room.

She raised her eyes for just an instant to note his stern gaze and then dropped them. Her arms hung by her side, her cheeks were flaming.

Tell your friends of Hazel Harlow the Actress.

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"It was a pretty piece of work, Miss Warren," he said, so sternly that for once she feared him. "It was a struggle between Reeve and myself as to whom should be made happy. I thought I had won, but I suppose he had a friend at Court who was not above trickery. One can often get such a friend by paying for assistance."

It was severe, but she recognised that it was justified from his point of view; he did not know all! Yet she could not endure that he should think her so mercenary. All three of them were regarding her in the same light.

"I was not bought!" she returned fiercely. "I did it for the best."

"Thank you!"

There was a little sarcasm in the tone.

"But you might have permitted your cousin to judge for herself. I must say that I cannot thank you for the implied suggestion that I am not likely to make a good husband. It wounds my vanity to learn that I am inferior to —— well, we need mention no names."

"I did not imply that!" cried Lucy, forgetting her caution. "You are ever so much better. I did it for your sake!" she went on, oblivious of everything except her own justification.

It stung her to the quick that he should think so ill of her.

"Would you have been happy with her? When you have become collected enough to think it over, you will see. If I played a trick, it was to save you!"

She stopped, panting, and looked defiantly at him. He scrutinised her steadily, then said slowly and very gravely:

"Why did you do it? Why for my sake?"

All the colour fled from Lucy's face; she appeared to be on the point of falling, but as he stepped forward to catch her, she fled blindly from the room. She had betrayed her own secret! He knew that she had saved him from the misery of a marriage with a giddy, utterly unsuitable woman, because—she loved him!

It was two months before Lucy and Arthur Biron met again; she had had an attack of brain fever, not a severe one, but her convalescence was slow. He had sent her flowers and had begged to be allowed to see her from the day she had left her bedroom, but she had steadily refused.

He had written to her, but her answer was that he should devote himself to those scientific studies which, she feared, he had neglected and for which he was so well equipped by Nature and Fate. She could not bear the shame of meeting him; her conduct must seem selfish, yet it was not much selfishness in her scheme. She meant to save him from unhappiness; she would have helped him to marry Millie if she had believed that it would have made him a happy man.

Her love was unselfish to that extent; yet, believing as she did and loving him, she had probably been influenced by Millie's words about a woman taking steps to bring a man to her side. Yes, she had been actuated just a little by that remark, and she would not see Arthur Biron.

But she yielded at last, in response to her easy-going, and not very observant aunt, who did not understand her reluctance.

"You were quite right," were his first words, "and I have longed for the opportunity to tell you so. I was infatuated, I should have been miserable, like many another man who has married in infatuation. You could see more deeply than I, and—I want a far-seeing and deep-thinking woman to help me in my studies."

It was a curious proposal, but it was sincere. Lucy shook her head.

"You may be infatuated with me!"

"I have had time to think," he replied earnestly, "and one mistake makes a man careful. You interested yourself in my happiness," he added more lightly, "and you must continue your good work."

"You must wait. You may change your mind. You must wait six months."

The last words hesitatingly.

"I was afraid you were going to say a year," he said with a smile. "And I believe you were, but you couldn't wait so long yourself! Now confess!"

And she did.

Sound Advice.

If you want to enjoy your Summer Holidays you would be wise to take with you the following sixpenny novels. You cannot have any idea how much pleasure you will derive from reading them, when you are sitting on the beach, or under a shady tree in the country:

THE PHANTOM ARMY,
By Max Pemberton.
A strange, stirring and romantic story.

MY JAPANESE WIFE,
By Clive Holland.
The only word for this book is "charming."

THE MASTER KEY,
By Florence Warden.
Amusing from first to last page.

THE SKIPPER'S WOOING.
By W. W. Jacobs.
An ideal book for the seaside. Very breezy.

You can get each of the above for 6d. at all Railway Bookstalls, or for 8d. post free from the Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, Strand, S.W.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS?

Have you succeeded in your trade or profession? If not, perhaps you are working at the wrong business. Your handwriting will tell your natural bent. Send a specimen of your handwriting to—

RANEE,
32 Pearson's Buildings,
Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope with each specimen of handwriting.

Beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventures next week.

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, August 5th. Postcards only, please. The first prize of One Guinea has been awarded this week to Miss M. Byers of 24 Farber Street, Crewe, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

*A GENTLEMAN who was spending a month in the Highlands went to hire a carriage for the purpose of taking his family for a drive. He looked at a vehicle and inquired how many it would hold. The hostler scratched his head thoughtfully and replied: "It houds four generally, but six if they're weel acquaint!"

A LITTLE girl came down to dessert at a dinner party, and sat next to her mother. This lady was much occupied in talking to her neighbours, and omitted to give the child anything to eat. After much time the little girl, unable to bear it any longer, with sobs in her throat, held up her plate and said, "does anybody want a clean plate?"

HE: "I wonder what the meaning of that picture is? The youth and the maiden are in a tender attitude." She: "Oh, don't you see? He has just asked her to marry him, and she is accepting him. How sweet! What does the artist call the picture?" He (looking about): "Oh, I see. It's written on a card at the bottom, 'Sold!'"

LADY (to chemist): "I have a corn from which I suffer dreadfully; can you recommmend anything that will cure it?" Chemist: "Certainly, madam. See, here you have an excellent preparation which will make your corn disappear in a very short time. I have a customer who has used this lotion for the last fourteen years, and he never tries anything else."

A MAN with a gleaming eye entered the waterworks office. "I say," he cried addressing one of the clerks, "you can send up to my house and take your old gas-meter out at once." "This is not the gas office." "It isn't?" "No, sir, this is the waterworks office." "Oh, is it? Well, then, send a man up to my house at once and cut the water off. I'm not going to walk a mile and a half this hot weather for nothing!"

GENERAL SIR EVELYN WOOD is a comparatively short man, and, although he does not look the part when dressed in mufti, is one of the bravest men who ever served our country. He is extremely fond of telling the following story against himself: While waiting at Aldershot station recently in plain clothes, and unattended by his aide-de-camp, he noticed a young private pacing the platform without taking the slightest notice of him, and, of course, omitting the customary salute. The general called him, and asked why he did not salute. "Because I don't know who you are," replied the private stiffly. "I am Sir Evelyn Wood." "Get out," was the rejoinder, "if Sir Evelyn Wood heard you say that, he'd punch your head for you," and he continued his stroll.

"I WOULDN'T call the doctor a quack." "Why wouldn't you?" "It suggests a duck, and there are lots of birds with bigger bills than that."

THE following advertisement appeared in one of our daily papers: "Wanted—A gentleman to undertake the sale of a patent medicine. The advertiser guarantees it will be profitable to the undertaker."

"HAVE you anything to say before we eat you?" said the King of the Cannibal Isles to a missionary. "I have," was the reply. "I want to talk to you awhile of the advantages of a vegetable diet."

"DID you deliver that telegram?" a post-office clerk asked his messenger boy. "Oh, yes; but the man does not live in Abingdon Square, but in Charlton Street, and not on the ground floor, but up three flights of stairs, and not in the front room, but in the back one; besides, his name isn't Johnson, but Thomson, and he isn't a man, but a woman."

TWO Irishmen got a job to clean some lofty windows. Having no ladder that would reach them, they were rather puzzled what to do. "Pat," said Mike, "I have it! Get a plank and put it through the widow. Oi'll sit on the plank outside, and you sit on the plank insoide." "All right," replied Pat. All went well until Mike, on the outside, cried out: "Oi've let the window-leather fall!" "All right," again replied Pat, "stop where you are, and Oi'll get it." Away went Pat downstairs; but, on getting into the street, he saw a huddled mass on the pavement: "Be jabbers, Mike," he cried, "you're here first! Which way did you come?"

A JOLLY old boy from the Midlands entered into one of the hotels at the seaside, and seeing on the slab on the right a crab dressed on the shell with legs, claws, and parsley ranged round, said to the landlord: "What d'ye call that?" "Crab," was the answer. "Looks good; I'll have 'un, and gie us a pint of ale." Bread-and-butter was added, and the diner left to his dinner. In about an hour the genial landlord entered the dining-saloon to see if his guest was getting on all right; he found him chawing up the last claw, the chawer red in the face, but beaming. "Like the crab, sir?" "Yes; he was capital. I never tasted one afore; but I think you baked 'un a little too long; the crust was hard. Let's have another pint." He had eaten the lot—shell, claws, and all complete.

THE sight of a row of forceps has closed the mouth of many sufferers, even after they had seated themselves in the dentist's chair. Dental surgeons intercept this, and the following amusing instance of how a boisterous Irishman was made to show his tooth may not be amiss. Pat came to the dentist's with his jaw very much swollen, from a tooth he desired to have pulled. But when the suffering son of Erin got into the dentist's chair and saw the gleaming pair of forceps approaching his face, he positively refused to open his mouth. The dentist quietly told his page boy to prick his patient with a pin, and when Pat opened his mouth to yell the dentist seized his tooth and out it came. "It did not hurt so much as you expected it would, did it?" the dentist asked smilingly. "Well no," said Pat, hesitatingly, as if doubting the truthfulness of his admission, "but," he added, placing his hand to the spot where the boy pricked him, "begorra, little did I think the roots would reach down like that."

Startling stage revelations next week.

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SEA BATHING AND DEAF PEOPLE.

SHOULD people affected with ear diseases bathe in the sea? The subject at this time of the year is not without interest, and useful hints may be given to many who are unaware of the influence that bathing exercises on the organ of the ear when it is diseased, or when a predisposition to disease exists.

In the first place, it should be remembered that cold water, and especially salt water, must never be allowed to pass into the ear; the neglect of proper precautions to prevent this occurring often causes catarrh or inflammation of the ear. It is therefore advisable for all who had sensitive ears to carefully plug the hole of the ear with cotton-wool before entering the water. A waterproof cap may also be used with advantage. According to the temperature of the water, bathing may be beneficial, or may prove otherwise. As a rule, when a catarrhal condition of the ear exists, it is wise to abstain entirely from river or sea bathing; but baths of warm or tepid salt water, once every two or three days, followed by a vigorous rubbing all over the body, will have favourable effects.

Sea or river bathing protects the system against catarrhal attacks, when there is merely a predisposition to the disease, but it is usually injurious when the catarrhal process has already set in.

As exceptions to the general rule, these baths have been found beneficial in chronic cases of dry catarrh, but as in other similar cases they have aggravated the deafness and increased the noises in the ear, the experiment can hardly be recommended.

Sea bathing is excellent for the scrofulous. When, however, they are suffering from an ear disease, baths are frequently very injurious, and have been found to produce an attack of inflammation in cases where the cure seemed almost complete. People whose ears discharge must totally refrain from bathing; if by any chance salt water, or even ordinary cold water, were to penetrate the ear when a perforation of the drum exists, the result would be most serious.

In short, sea bathing cannot be recommended to persons affected with ear diseases. In the very few cases where no injurious effects would result from it, the benefit derived, as far as deafness is concerned, can only be problematic.

A reason which would also show that the seaside is not quite suitable as a health resort for deaf people, unless due precautions be taken, is, that on account of the strong winds which are nearly always prevalent, the danger of contracting colds or getting into draughts is greater.

On the other hand, a change from town to country will always be beneficial. The impure air breathed in offices, shops, and workrooms favours the development of the affections of the throat, nasal passages, and middle ear. A residence of a few weeks in a part of the country where the atmosphere is pure, fresh, and dry is sure to be of benefit, hilly or upland country being especially recommended.

Dry and warm weather, having a beneficial effect on practically all forms of chronic deafness, summer is obviously the best time for successfully treating the disease. Many people are so ill-advised as not to avail themselves of this opportunity, simply because their infirmity at this time of the year is less troublesome than usual. But a few months will bring back the old condition, when treatment will be rendered all the more difficult for having to contend at once with the disease and the strong influence of cold and damp.

In the "Journal for the Deaf," the description is given of Drouet's system of treatment of chronic ear diseases, of which deafness is the consequence. It is enough to read the report of the cures which have been effected by this treatment to realise the fame which now attaches to the name of the Drouet Institute. For, not only have many cures been obtained in long standing cases after a very short treatment, but the system has also proved entirely successful in completely restoring the hearing of people who had been previously treated without avail, and who, in consequence, had given up the hope of ever being relieved.

Two instances of the curability of ear disease by the Drouet Method, after failure of the ordinary treatment used by aural specialists, are shown in the following cases, and many others will be found in the July number of the paper referred to above.

Mr. R. J. Harris, of Newquay, Cornwall, submitted his case on May 2, 1901, to the Drouet Institute. He had been suffering for about two years with deafness, could hear the tick of a watch only an inch from the left ear, and could not hear it at all with the right ear. He often had painful gatherings in the ears, which broke and discharged. There was a continuous noise in the ears, with nervousness and occasional attacks of dizziness. The nose and throat were affected by catarrhal discharges, and the voice was husky. Altogether a difficult and obstinate case to treat on account of the complications. He further stated that he had been under treatment by an aural specialist, but without receiving the slightest benefit.

On May 7th Mr. Harris began the Drouet treatment, prescribed for him by the consulting surgeon, and continued until June 16th, when he pronounced himself cured, in the following letter:

3 Acland-gardens, Tower-road, Newquay.
Cornwall, June 16, 1901.

I have much pleasure in informing you I can hear perfectly well, the discharges from the ear have stopped, the nose is quite clear, and the throat entirely well. I feel grateful for the relief your treatment has given me, and I will recommend to you anybody who suffers from the same complaint.—Thanking you for your kind attention, I am, yours truly, R. J. HARRIS.

The second case is the following:

Miss J. P., Newcastle-on-Tyne, was afflicted for thirty years with a chronic inflammation of the middle ear which produced deafness and a continual discharge. Miss P. placed herself under the treatment of a leading ear specialist, who finally dismissed her case as incurable, attributing the failure to obtain relief to constitutional causes. In this condition of poor health and suffering great annoyance from noises in the head, deafness, and a constant discharge from the ears, she began the Drouet treatment, and after a few weeks reported, in the following letter to the Institute, a complete cure had been accomplished:

Newcastle-on-Tyne, June 1, 1901.

I deferred writing for a short time to see if my ears continued in a satisfactory condition. I am satisfied with them, so shall not require any more treatment.

I thank you for much kind attention during treatment, and especially appreciate the results, as my case was chronic, and had been under other treatment formerly without obtaining the benefit I now enjoy.—Yours truly, J. P.

The full name and address of this person will be gladly given privately by the Drouet Institute to any applicant.

A special feature of the Drouet treatment is that patients who cannot come to London to be examined are enabled, however, to receive advice by filling up a pathological report form, which allows them to state explicitly their case. This form may be had, free of charge, with a copy of the "Journal for the Deaf," by writing to the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 72 Regent's Park-road, London, N.W. In fact, all the persons whose cures have just been reported were treated by means of the pathological form, and never saw the consulting surgeon who prescribed for them.

It is, however, always advisable, when possible, to be personally examined at the Drouet Institute, 72 Regent's Park Road, N.W., where consultations are held daily, except Sunday, from two to four in the afternoon. Special consultations may also be had at any time by previous arrangement. For all personal consultations a fee is charged. Any advice by correspondence is absolutely free, as are also the consultations given by means of the report form.

To place beyond all doubt the authenticity of the testimonial letters to which reference has been made, they have been placed in the autograph-room at the Drouet Institute, where they may be seen, amongst hundreds of others from former patients who have been successfully treated. This room is open to the public every day, except Sunday, from nine a.m. till five p.m.

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

By a slip of the pen I last week said that our new series,

"The Adventures of an Actress,"

would begin in this number. Obviously, as you will have noticed from the other announcements on the subject, it should have been next week's paper—the Bank Holiday number.

I hope you are doing me the kindness of mentioning this series to your friends. Most people are interested in matters connected with the theatre, and these new stories, stripping as they do all the false glamour from the stage, and showing it and its votaries in their true and varying colours, cannot fail to attract the widest attention. And even if you do not care for theatrical matters, you will enjoy the stories for the sweet romance they contain. Each week's story will be complete in itself, and yet once you begin the series you will not rest till you have read the complete set of stories.

Once again I would warn you that to delay ordering your copy may lead to disappointment, for the demand is sure to be immense. Therefore, your wisest course will be to fill in this form and hand it to your newsagent:

Please reserve for me a copy of *Short Stories* dated August 10th.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

I am pleased to be able to announce that I have just concluded arrangements with a lady of great experience, who will in future advise on this page in matters connected with

Love, Courtship and Marriage.

Here is the first batch of replies to letters which have reached me lately on these subjects:

No, "Annette," I do not think you will regret it, and I cordially support you in your decision. When you became engaged to him three years ago, you knew that he intended to go out to the West Indies as a missionary, and you became a hospital nurse so that you might acquire knowledge that would be useful among the natives. Now the time has arrived, your relatives are trying to persuade you to give him up and stay here. You love him, and are willing to share his lot. My advice under the circumstances is to go with him. I wish you every happiness in your far-away home, and shall be pleased to hear from you again.

It is very hard, "Emily," but he is not the man for you. He paid marked attention to you, and almost declared his affection; then your cousin comes upon the scene; he is captivated by outside show and leaves you for her. He has forsaken one who is homely, domesticated, and would have made him a thoroughly good wife, for a girl who thinks of little but dress and "cutting a dash" at balls and parties, and who is quite unfitted for his humble station. A man with so little discrimination and common-sense would never make a good husband for you; and, later on, you will be glad of the fact that is now causing you pain.

You ask me, "Despairing Jack," whether there are not occasions when suicide is not only justifiable but the right thing to do. Now, read the sad little tale you have told me, just as I repeat it, word for word, and then, having thought it all over and faced the situation like a man, see whether you will not feel with me that it was all for the best. You were engaged to a girl, and for six months saw her daily, and she seemed to love you as much as you loved her. Then one day a young sailor cousin of hers returned from a voyage, and you saw, only too plainly, that her heart and affections were given to him, and not to you. In vain you implored her not to change; one day she disappeared with her cousin, and you have never seen or heard of her again. Can't you see that you are well rid of her? Can't you understand that by her leaving you in that manner she proved herself to be unworthy of your love? Cheer up, and one day you will find the right sort of girl to make you a good wife. Your letter was no trouble. I hope you will get the post you are trying for.

I am so sorry for you in your trouble, "Lonely Lassie." But I do think that, in time, you will feel that he really was unworthy of the love of a nice-minded girl. Anyone who could stoop to such meanness as he has been guilty of would only prove more unsatisfactory as a husband than he has been as your lover. I should advise you to write to him and tell him plainly that, after having discovered him in the act of opening one of your letters, and setting his sister to spy out all your actions during the past two months, you feel that all your respect and love for him is dead, and that you wish to have nothing to do with him in the future. Return all his presents and letters, and cheer up! Happier days are in store for you, I feel sure.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I am open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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Called by him "TATCHO"

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And why, pray, is the successful poet, playwright, and journalist an eminent authority on hair restorer? Eager for an explanation a *Daily Mail* representative sought out Mr. Sims. . . .

Now Mr. G. R. Sims, as many people know, is one of the busiest men in the kingdom, but hastily affixing his signature to a letter, he looked up and extended a characteristically cordial welcome. Then he said, "I will explain. I found that I was rapidly going bald. Not seriously, you understand, but the thinning out was sufficiently marked to set me thinking out a remedy. I went to two specialists, both of whom cheerfully assured me that I should be absolutely bald in two years.

"Then I discovered the preparation which is now placed upon the market. I found that I had hit upon a remedy capable of working wonders. Look at my hair now, isn't that convincing evidence of the value of my preparation?

"Ladies confirm my good opinion of it as a dressing for daily use. Mrs. Brown-Potter, whose beautiful hair is the admiration of the entire lady world, writes that she uses nothing but 'Tatcho.' There is nothing to prevent every woman from making her hair silken in texture and bountiful in volume, for she can obtain a bottle of 'Tatcho' now in every town or even village."

In order that the public may be able to test the superlative value of Mr. George R. Sims' discovery, the Company is issuing large 4/6 size test bottles post free for **1/10**, under plain cover, one of which may be had on application. Please cut off the corner of this advertisement where marked and send with name and address, legibly written to the—

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HAIR RENEWER
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SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 37 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1¼ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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"BY THE SAD SEA WAVES."

Safe Bind—Safe Find.

Mr. CHARLES CHARD, of 7 Denne Crescent, New Church St., CAPETOWN, South Africa, under date June 19th, 1901, writes:

"My brother, a Farrier in the Army Service "Corps stationed at Greenpoint Camp, whilst "strolling around the beach in the above "vicinity, came across a case of your valuable "Pills washed up from the ill-fated mail liner "'Tantallon Castle,' which stranded on Robben "Island, a distance of 14 miles. Notwithstanding "being submerged for over a month, the pills had "not lost their medicinal properties, and still can "hold their reputation of being 'Worth a Guinea "a Box,' which was evidenced by the numerous "calls from the soldiers on hearing from their "comrades of the lucky find. Your Pills are "considered, amongst the military community, "invaluable for rendering the nerves steady, and "for many of the ailments which poor Tommy on "active service is subjected to."

NOTE.—BEECHAM'S PILLS for Export are always packed in water-tight lined cases, and to this circumstance is due the fact that their marvellous properties were not impaired.

BEECHAM'S PILLS ARE HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE.

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